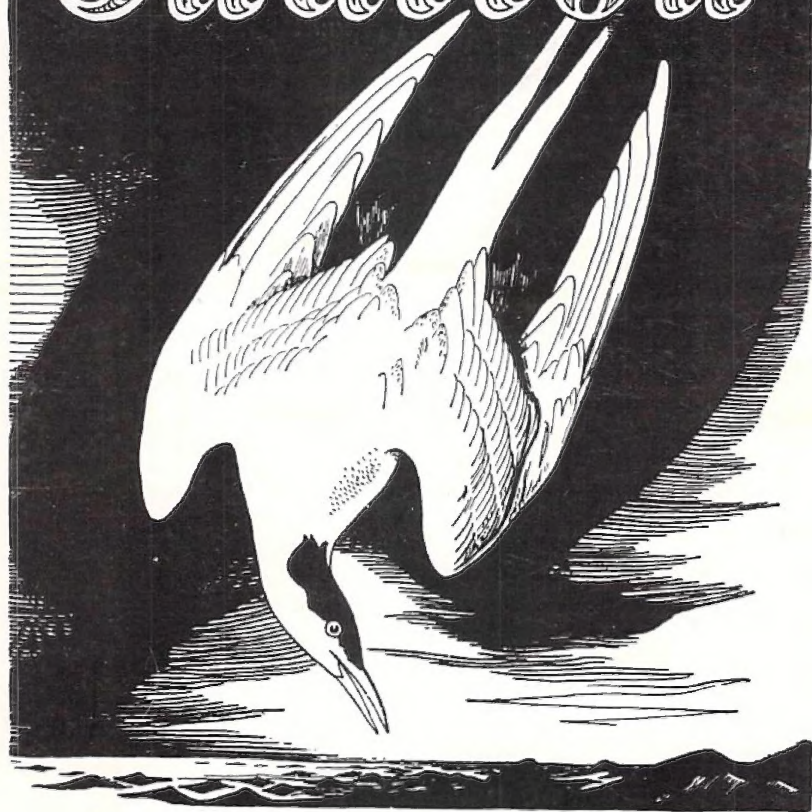


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BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

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ROYAL NAVAL BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY

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Membership has been widened from the R.N. to include all those who share a common background — the sea itself — regardless of nationality.*

Aims and activities. The primary aim of the Society is to promote a forum for the exchange of information on seabirds, and of landbirds at sea, by members for whom birdwatching is a spare-time recreation and hobby. The secondary aim is to co-ordinate the efforts of individual members using standardised recording methods so that observations can be of value to the professional ornithologist ashore.

R.N.B.W.S. Record Forms. Standardised forms for recording Seabirds and Landbirds at sea, Seabird Census sheets, Bird examined in the Hand (BEH) forms have been designed for use at sea. Stocks are kept by Chief Petty Officer C. A. R. Bailey, 8 Grange Close, Gosport, Hants. PO12 3DX. Please give detailed requirements and enclose a large stamped and addressed envelope.

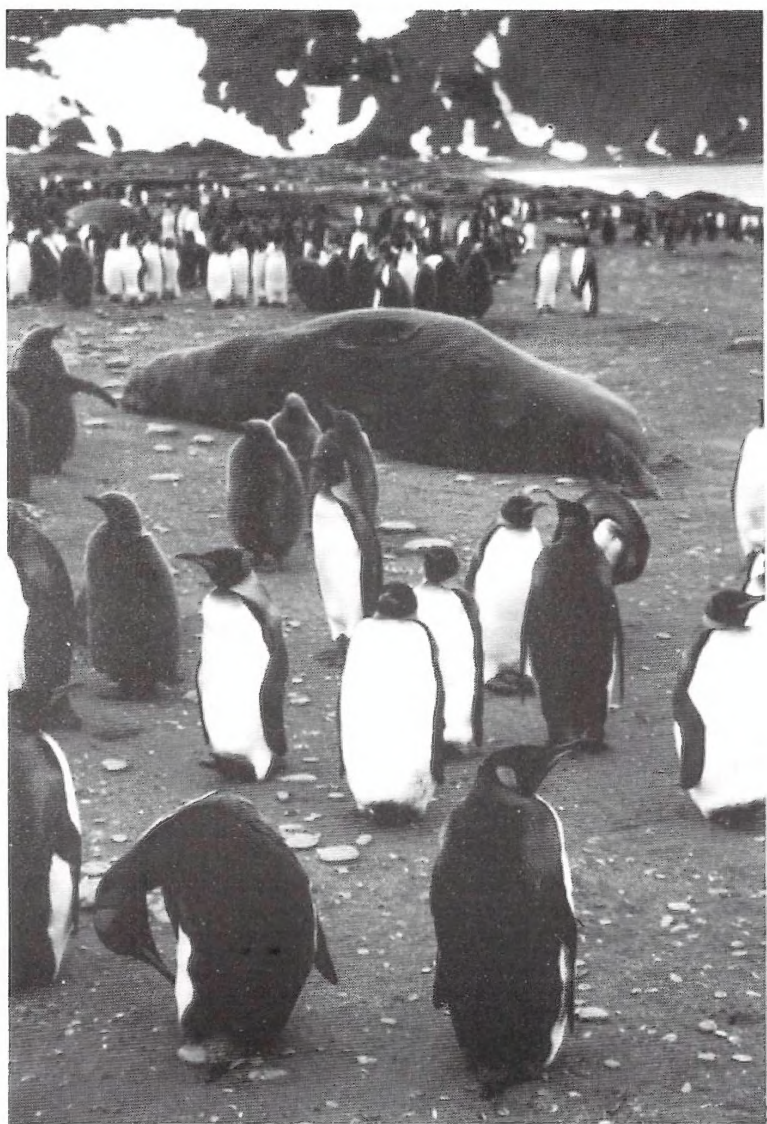
Completed record forms should be sent to Stephen Chapman (seabirds) and the Chairman (landbirds).

Material for publication in *Sea Swallow* should be sent to the Editor (see instructions to authors inside back cover).

*An application form for membership is at the back of this edition of *Sea Swallow*.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL	<i>inside front cover</i>
FOREWORD	2
EDITORIAL	2
NOTES ON SEABIRD REPORTS RECEIVED 1985	3
by Stephen E. Chapman	
SEABIRD RECORDS FROM THE APPROACHES TO THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR	14
by Dr. E. F. J. Garcia	
CONSERVATION PROBLEMS IN THE FALKLAND ISLANDS AND THE ROLE OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS FOUNDATION	21
by Simon Lyster, Hon. Secretary F.I.F.	
SOUTH ATLANTIC BIRD ISLANDS	24
by W. R. P. Bourne and W. F. Curtis	
SEABIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM METEOROLOGICAL REPORTS	35
by Captain A. S. Young, M.N.	
SEABIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA	38
by Captain P. W. G. Chilman, M.N.	
LANDBIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA	40
by Commander M. B. Casement, O.B.E., R.N.	
WATCHING ATLANTIC SEABIRDS FROM ST. IVES, CORNWALL	41
by Bernard King	
LANDBIRDS FROM SHIPS AT SEA	46
Analysis by Commander M. B. Casement, O.B.E., R.N.	
NOTES ON THE LAVA GULL OF THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS	59
by Floyd E. Hayes, Kent R. Beaman and William S. Baker	
NEW AND UNUSUAL SEABIRD RECORDS SUMMARISED FROM RECENT LITERATURE	61
by Stephen E. Chapam	
SHORT NOTES	
South Atlantic Stowaways, Lt. C. A. Snow, R.N., H.M.S. <i>Birmingham</i>	64
Storm Fatalities - Tubenoses, Lt. A. K. Ross, B.Sc., R.N., H.M.S. <i>Hermione</i>	65
Seaborne Observations of Peregrine Falcon Behaviour, Lt. A. K. Ross, B.Sc., R.N., H.M.S. <i>Birmingham</i>	66
BOOK REVIEWS	67
TAIL PIECE	70
by Captain D. S. Dobson, R.N.	
R.N.B.W.S. JOINING FORM	71
USEFUL ADDRESSES	<i>inside back cover</i>



King Penguins and Elephant Seals
St. Andrews Bay, South Georgia

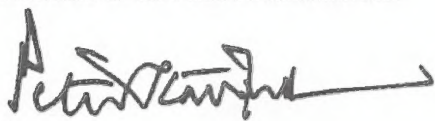
Photo: Capt. D. A. J. Blackburn, R.N., HMS Birmingham

FOREWORD

... and no birds sing." So wrote Keats, in a somewhat different context. August, on shore in the UK anyway, is a bad time for ornithologists, who may however still occasionally be seen, like the poet's Knight-at-arms, "*alone and palely loitering*". Unusual summer arrivals have long since arrived, and made their mark; while, with a few precocious exceptions, the autumn ones have yet to start coming. Even the local newspapers' nature pages tend to dry up. And there is no song, but for the occasional obdurate resident or forgetful migrant.

At sea, however, no month need be dull, unless, perhaps, too much time is spent ploughing the same tracks — a fate which befalls less often those of us in the "grey funnel" business than it does our merchant colleagues. So we should, therefore, be able to look forward to some reports from the deployment "GLOBAL '86", far-flung as it has been, hard-hit as it was in the early stages by the sad damage which put *Illustrious* out of action for so many weeks.

And we may also look forward to the results of our photographic competition, which could, let us hope, arouse enough interest to bring about a better-than-usual turnout at the AGM in December.



EDITORIAL

I see no need to say much this year; I would prefer to let this edition speak for itself. Amongst the familiar names of many experienced observers there will be seen a number of new names. The first reports from GLOBAL '86 round the world R.N. Task Group deployment have reached me recently, and my hopes are high for further useful material next year. The society is in good health.

The main new venture this year is the SEA SWALLOW Photographic Competition which has resulted in an excellent response from a wide range of amateur photographers. Entries have been of a high standard and are still coming in; it will clearly be a difficult choice to judge the winner. Results will be announced, and a selection will be on display, at the A.G.M. on 5th December. The best of them will be used to illustrate SEA SWALLOW 36 next year, but for obvious reasons of cost will appear in black and white.

It is already clear that the Photographic Competition is here to stay, so get busy with your cameras for next year starting NOW. Entries must reach me by September 1987. And of course please keep your regular reports, and contributions flowing in at any time.

MICHAEL CASEMENT

NOTES ON SEABIRD REPORTS RECEIVED 1985

By Stephen E. Chapman

It is impressive this year to see the quantity and quality of observations regularly submitted by 25 seagoing observers and, for the first time, reports from two members, Chief Engineer J. R. Boughey and Lieutenant C. A. Snow, R.N.

Mr Boughey sent in excellent notes from the Australian Bight and Indian Ocean. While Lt. Snow, with H.M.S. *Birmingham* in the South Atlantic, visited the Falklands and South Georgia during the southern spring months and made very detailed observations.

In the temperate North Pacific, Captain Joe Welch enjoyed three consecutive voyages (some 30,000 nautical miles) from San Francisco to Taiwan/Hong Kong and forwarded a mammoth report of birds sighted day by day.

More birds must come on board than are reflected in the Bird in Hand reports noted on page 13. It would be useful if observers could concentrate on these in future.

As an indication of the overall geographic scope of numbers of reports received in 1985, about 32% are from the North Atlantic, 20% from the South Atlantic, 27% from the Pacific Ocean, 11% from the Indian Ocean and the remaining 10% from other areas.

Reports considered in this summary were received from the following observers whose observations are individually identified by their initials:

Mr R. C. L. Aran — O.W.S. *Starella*. Multiple voyages between Fleetwood and Ocean Station LIMA (57°N 20°W). March-April 1985 (2 page report).

Chief Petty Officer C. A. R. Bailey, R.N. — H.M.S. *Sirius*. North Atlantic. July-August 1984 (4 page report); Newfoundland-Plymouth. November 1984 (1 page report).

C.P.O. Yeoman B. Bewsher — R.F.A. *Regent*. Portland, Indian Ocean, Suez Canal, Ascension Island, Falklands, South Georgia, Ascension, U.K. July-November 1985 (19 page narrative report and checklist).

Chief Engineer J. R. Boughey — M.V. *Taiwo*. Cape Town, River Plate, east coast ports of U.S., Mississippi River, Durban, Rio Grande (Brazil). May-September 1984 (13 page report). M.V. *Hornchurch*. Port Kembla, Cape Leuwin, Cape of Good Hope, Rotterdam. September-November 1985 (15 page report).

Third Officer R. K. Q. Butler — M.V. *Remuera Bay*. New Zealand to Cape Horn and off the Falklands. October 1985 (15 page report).

Mr S. E. Chapman — M.V. *Esso Bayway*. Ceuta, Skikda, Gibraltar. December 1985 (1 page report).

Captain P. W. G. Chilman — M.V. *Tectus*. Sepetiba Bay, Pohang (South Korea). February-April 1985 (5 page report).

L.R.O.(G.) N. W. Cottle, R.N. — H.M.S. *Beaver*. U.K. waters and return voyage to Gibraltar. January-May 1985 (9 page report). Portland to Gibraltar and return to Rosyth. September-November 1985 (10 page report). Northern North Sea, Baltic. November-December 1985 (5 page report).

- Chief Officer P. C. Dyer — M.V. *Lundy Service*. South coast of Java, Singapore. February 1985, and South China Sea, October 1985 (2 page report).
- Radio Officer M. G. Finn — M.V. *Rangelock*. Panama, Inchon, Portland (Victoria), Port Lincoln, Muscat, Richards Bay, Kaohsiung, Newcastle (NSW), Philippines, December 1984-July 1985 (11 page report).
- Dr M. G. Knol — M.V. *Cast Husky*. Antwerp, Montreal, Rotterdam, May (westbound) and August 1985 (eastbound) (27 page detailed compilation of observations).
- Chief Officer C. R. Lisher — M.V. *Landguard Point*. Liverpool, Bayonne, Ghent, Bayonne, Glasgow, December 1984-January 1985 (6 page report).
- Third Officer A. R. Louch — R.R.S. *Discovery*. Puntarenas, South Georgia, South Sandwich, Montevideo, U.K. February-April 1985 (19 page report). R.R.S. *Charles Darwin*. Southwest Approaches and northeast Atlantic. July-August 1985 (4 page report).
- Mr P. Meeth — M.V. *Nedlloyd Oranjestad*. Rotterdam, Rio de Janeiro, Santos, Buenos Aires, Santos, Rotterdam, November-December 1984. (Detailed in-depth census report, maps and analysis.) Rotterdam, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Santos, Buenos Aires, Paranagua, Salvador, Rotterdam, September-October 1985. (Detailed census reports, maps and analysis.)
- Mr B. A. Mullan — M.V. *Cardigan Bay*. North Pacific, July 1985 (1 page report).
- Captain K. Salwegter — M.V. *Amstelvoorn*. Geelong, Bandar Abbas, Durban, November-December 1984 (5 page report); Xingang, Dalrymple Bay, Singapore, Bandar Abbas, Durban, Rotterdam, June-September 1985 (11 page report).
- Captain D. M. Simpson — M.V. *Bigorange XII*. South Yemen and Gulf of Suez, December 1984-February 1985 (3 monthly census reports, M.V. *Pacific Bear*, Zuluf and Marjan offshore oilfields, July 1985 (1 month census and summary checklist report).
- Lieutenant C. A. Snow, R.N. — H.M.S. *Birmingham*. Falklands and South Georgia, October-November 1984 (44 page report).
- Mr T. Wachter — S.S. *Uganda*. Ascension, Port Stanley, Ascension (20 page summary report and analysis).
- Captin J. W. Welch — M.V. *Strathconon*. Hokkaido, Los Angeles, Seattle, Busan, Los Angeles, November 1984-January 1985 (12 page census report). M.V. *Main Express*. Taiwan, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oakland, Long Beach, Hong Kong, Kaohsiung, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, June-September 1985 (32 page census report).
- Chief Officer M. G. Weir — M.V. *Fort Kamloops*. Sumatra, Jeddah, August 1984 (1 page report). M.V. *Fort Calgary*. Port Kelang, Suez, Nantes, Newport, Panama, Long Beach, February-June 1985 (8 page report). M.V. *Mississippi*. Jeddah, Muscat, September 1985 (1 page report).
- Radio Officer W. Weitkowitz — M.V. *Florenz*. Croften, Los Angeles, Panama, Oran, Annaba, Dakar, Lagos, Abidjan, Venezia, December 1984-May 1985 (20 page report).
- Captain R. L. Westwater — M.V. *Fleet Wave*. Port Canaveral, Genoa, Tripoli, Tela, Port Everglades, Gothenburg, Sheerness, Almirante, Cristobal, Bremerhaven, Oslo, Almirante, Moin (Costa Rica), Bremerhaven, February-June 1986 (16 page report).
- Captain R. R. Will — M.V. *Al Zohal*. Cape Town, Jeddah, November 1984; Paranagua, Durban, March 1985 (2 page report).
- Second Officer P. D. Williams — M.V. *Scottish Eagle*. Falklands and South Georgia, March-June 1985 (12 page report).

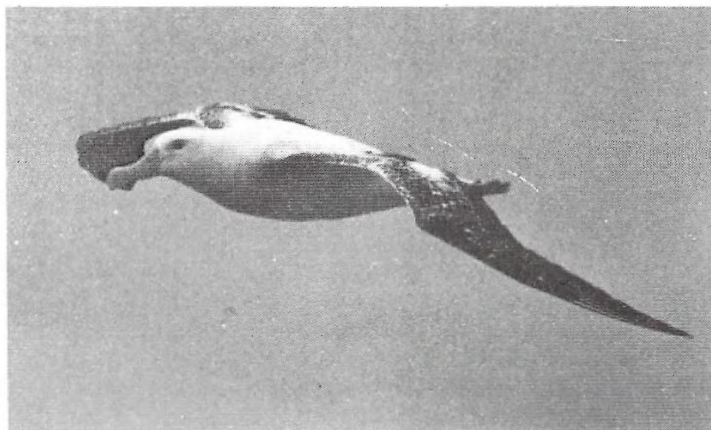
NOTES ON SPECIES

ALBATROSSES *DIOMEDEIDAE*

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*. On passage from Sepetiba Bay to Pohang first sighted in the South Atlantic at 34°S 9°W on 6 Mar 83 and then daily across the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans to 31°S 73°E (PWGC). Recorded daily during May 84 on a S. Atlantic crossing along the 34 parallel from Cape Town to the river Plate (JRB). Two at 18°59'S 11°00'W on 13 Aug 84 (JRB). Small numbers noted almost daily on passage from Port Kembla to Rotterdam from 38°S 149°E on 24 Sep to 28°S 12°E on 22 Oct 85 (JRB).

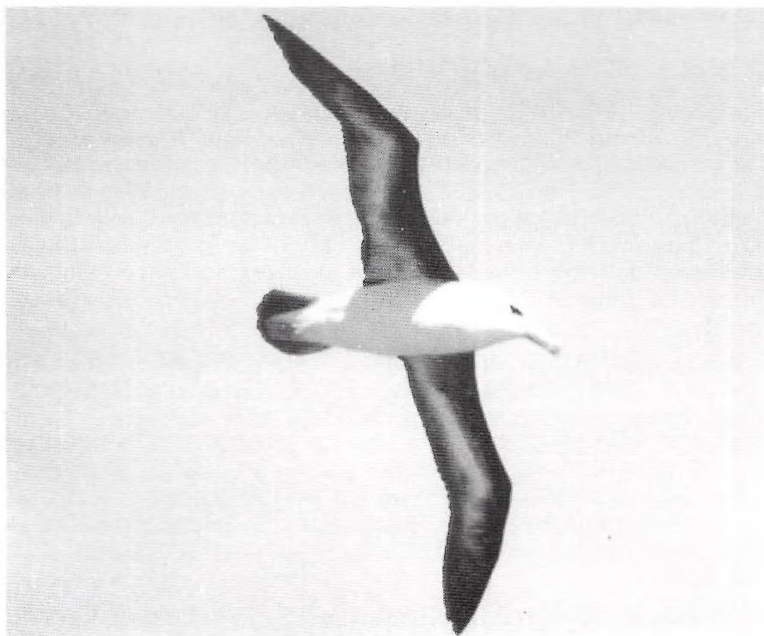
Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*. Ten off Santos on 23 Nov 84 (PM). Total of 93 as day total at 29°S 49°W (PM). In the South Atlantic recorded by JRB during May 84 as follows: one at 33°28'S 14°11'E, two at 33°53'S 35°54'W, one at 34°12'S 43°08'W, and one at 34°33'S 48°58'W, and on 28 June 84 one at 28°26'S 47°5'W. 25 off Santos (24°S) on 22 Sep 85 and 6 off Rio on 10 Oct 85 (PM). Daily observations of small numbers across the Indian Ocean from 35°S 114°E on 1 Oct to 31°S 52°E on 14 Oct 85 (JRD).

White-capped Albatross *Diomedea cauta*. In the South Atlantic and Indian Ocean PWGC recorded birds only as follows: 2 at 35°S 2°W on 7 Mar. 1 at 37°S 15°E on 10 Mar, 6 next day at 37°S 20°E and one at 37°S 32°E on 13 Mar 83.



Immature Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*
South Tasman Sea, November 1984

Photo: B. A. Mullan



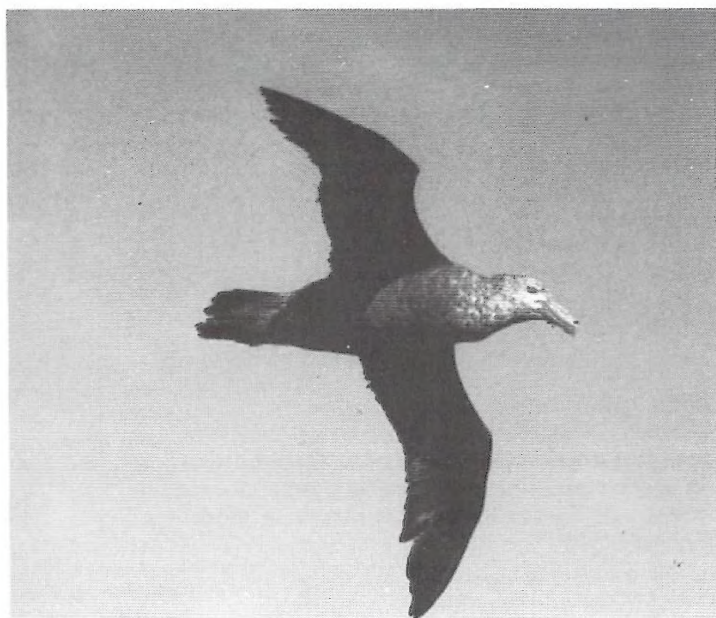
Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophrys*
 Photo: T. Wachter, SS Uganda

Laysan Albatross *Diomedea immutabilis*. A flock of at least 50 noted following a fishing vessel in the early morning at 40°30'N 167°30'W on 29 Jan 85 (JWW). An analysis of sightings by JWW over nine Pacific Ocean crossings covering most seasons showed birds present in small numbers, and widespread all year in 1984/85, north of latitude 36°-40°N from longitude 155°E to 130°W in winter, but restricted more to the central and eastern part, reaching east from 155°E to approximately 160°W in summer months. No birds were recorded during a crossing in Sep 85.

Black-footed Albatross *Diomedea nigripes*. Flock of fifty following fishing vessel in early morning at 40°30'N 167°30'W on 29 Jun 85 (JWW). Recorded on every Pacific Ocean crossing by JWW at all seasons.

FULMARS, PRIONS, PETRELS, SHEARWATERS PROCELLARIIDAE

Giant Petrel *Macronectes sp.* Crossing the South Pacific in Oct 85 RKQB noted increasing numbers of seabirds following all day at 54°S 63°W including 7-8 of these large petrels.



Giant Petrel *Macronectes* sp.

South Atlantic

Photo: Ldg. Seaman D. Hunt, HMS Southampton

Cape Petrel *Daption capense*. On northward passage from the River Plate to USA last seen at 24°50'S 43°33'W on 19 Jun 84 (JRD). Two at 24°35'S 2°21'W on 15 Aug 84 (JRB). A single bird at 15°48'S 41°08'E on 27 Aug 85 (KS).

Snow Petrel *Pagodroma nivea*. One apparent sighting of a single bird at 48°32'S 177°53'E on 7 Oct 85 (RKQB), described as smaller than Pintado Petrel, all white with very small dark bill. Sketch submitted.

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*. Crossing the North Atlantic westwards, recorded daily from 51°N 1°E to 45°N 33°E and then from 45°N 51°W to 48°N 62°W in May 84, and significantly higher numbers in lat. 51°-53°N right across the ocean when westbound in Aug 84 (MGK). One at 36°13'N 122°10'W on 2 Jan 85 (WW).

Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*. Two at 53°09'S 40°16'W on 4 Oct 85 when the ship was in the vicinity of icebergs (BB).

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*. Recorded daily during May 84 South Atlantic crossing from Cape Town to the River Plate with maximum of 12 at 33°S 01°W (JRB) and a single at 24°50'S

43°33'W on 19 Jun 84 (JRB). Later in the year in Aug they were noted daily from 16°08'S 15°12'W to 34°10'S 17°56'E (JRB). Single birds at 29°30'S 17°00'W on 5 Sep 85 and 17°23'N 23°30'W on 7 Sep 85 (PM). Two at 16°36'N 25°16'W on 7 Nov 84 (PM). Daily sightings of small numbers across the Indian Ocean from 33°S 110°E on 2 Oct to 31°S 52°E on 14 Oct 85 (JRB). A single bird at 23°00'S 36°32'E on 29 Aug 85 (KS).

Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*. Total of three seen during the day, noon position 15°56'N 2°57'E on 13 Sep 85 (KS).

Black-capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata*. One petrel which was probably this species seen in the Windward Passage on 26 Mar 85 (RWL).

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*. Singles at 34°03'N 19°35'W on 15 Aug, 31°53'N 24°58'W on 19 Aug, 31°56'N 22°27'W on 26 Aug and five 30 miles west of Madeira on 27 Aug 85 (ARL).

Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*. One in the Gulf of Aden close to the Red Sea entrance on 19 Dec 84 (DMS). Five at 20°27'N 63°21'E on 2 Aug 85, sea temp. 26°C and strong monsoon wind blowing Thirty at 20°N 59°E on 17 Aug and one at 16°10'N 56°59'E next day (KS). Probable sightings of singles on 4 and 5 Aug 85 in 13°N 49°E (BB). One on board at 16°25'N 41°04'E on 7 Aug possibly on board for the previous 24 hours. Identification supported by measurements and photographs. (BB).

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*. First encountered at 44°N 39°W on 22 May 84 then 100 at 45°N 52°W (on the Grand Banks, sea temp. 6.2°C) on 24 May (MGK). Later in the year and further north in latitudes 51°-53°N noted across the ocean from 54°W (Belle Isle) to 14°W. One at 56°10'N 13°03'W on 1 May 85 (RCLA). A single bird at 20°11'N 62°07'W on 30 Jun 85 (JRB). Thirteen at 14°06'S 38°33'W on 16 Sep 85 (PM). Raft of 500 at 47°52'N 13°47'W on 7 Oct 85 (NWC), and also 22 in moult on primaries (showing whitish patches) at 44°07'N 15°30'W on 15 Oct 85. Approaching the Cape of Good Hope, two seen at 34°51'S 24°47'E (sea temp. 24°C) on 19 Oct 85 and next day groups of 100's seen (sea temp. 18.5°C) at 35°12'S 19°00'E (JRB).

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*. Six at 37°S 20°E on 11 Mar 83, 7 at 37°S 26°E on 12 Mar 83 and one at 37°S 32°E next day (PWGC). In May noted in the central North Atlantic from 45°N 33'W to 43°N 46'W (MGK). In September, on a more northerly crossing, present only in the extreme east from 18°N to 14°W (MGK).

Unidentified Shearwater *Calonectris* sp. In the Gulf 64' SW of Kharg Island DMS noted single unidentified large shearwaters on 19 Aug and 30 Aug 85, commenting that they were the only big shearwater to have been seen in the Gulf in ten years of sailing in this area.

White-bellied/Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregata grallaria/tropicalis*. As commented here previously, distinguishing these two storm-petrels at sea is not an easy task as there is a white-bellied form of *F. tropica*. In the Indian Ocean two *F. grallaria* were reported at 37°15'S 25°40'E on 12 Mar 83 by PWGC who described them as having belly and centre of the underwing white. No apparent dark line on the belly but could have been, as not seen well enough. Very irregular zigzag flight low over water and frequent splashing bounce off surface (wind force 5). Twelve birds noted as *F. grallaria* were reported west of Socotra at 12°51'N 60°47'E in Jul 85 (BB). A single at 33°49'S 26°41'E on 5 Sep 84, two at 31°34'S 32°29'W on 16 Sep and one at 32°09'S 46°06'W on 18 Sep 84 (JRB). In the Indian Ocean JRB noted a single *F. tropica* at 33°27'S 109°28'E on 2 Oct 85 and *Fregata* sp. as follows: three at 31°00'S 86°38'E on 7 Oct 85, a total of 5 at 31°19'S 76°52'E on 9 Oct, and a single at 31°39'S 56°46'E on 13 Oct. Close to the Tristan Islands, where both species breed, RWL noted 6 *Fregata* sp. on 17 Mar. 85.

White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*. Two seen ahead of the ship and well described at 36°S 119°E on 30 Sep 85 (JRB).
 Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. One on board at 43°N 48°W on 23 May 84 (MGK).

STORM-PETRELS HDYROBATIDAE

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. An unspecified number seen in the Red Sea 58' SW of Jeddah on 24 Jul 85 where they are scarce, and NE of Djibouti on 27 Jul (DMS). Small flocks regularly seen through the last half of July and throughout Aug 85 at the Marjan/Zuluf oil platforms at 28°15'N 49°15'E (DMS). These latter observations conform with those from this area last year and DMS comments would seem to indicate that this species is a much more numerous visitor to the inner Gulf than previously thought.

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*. One or two small flocks near the Nymphica Rig (14°49'N 50°15'E) off South Yemen and single bird in the Red Sea at 15°48'N 41°37'E in Dec 84 (DMS).

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*. On a North Atlantic crossing in mid-September MGK noted single birds to be widespread across the ocean with a concentration of 17 at 51°N 53°W on 15 Sep 84. Elsewhere in the Atlantic two at 34°N 54°W on 13 Jun 85 (RLW): one at 50°30'N 7°00'W on 27 Jul 85 (ARL); seven at 48°N 6°W on 2 Sep 85 and at least 50 during the day at 42°N 10°W next day (PM). At least 1,000 at 40°N 163°W on 28 Jun 85 (JWW).

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*. At least 400 at 44°N 152°E on 26 Aug 85 (JWW).

Strreaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*. Groups totalling about 170 at 33°N 128°E on 8 Apr 83 (PWGC). Seven at 28°N 128°30'E on 13 Jul 85, at least 20 at 39°N 149°E on 16 Jul 85 and at least 10 at 42°N 156°E next day (JWW).

Black Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma melania*. A small group about 40' from Cape San Lorenzo, Lower California on 5 Jan 85 (WW).

Fork-tailed Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma furcata*. One at 42°N 156°E on 28 Nov 84 (JWW) and two probables at 47°N 156°W on 21 Jul 85 (JWW).

Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma matsudairae*. On passage from Geelong to Bandar Abbas at 1°27'N 80°E on 18 Nov 84 KS reported five storm-petrels in the wake looking completely black but with similar behaviour though bigger than Wilson's which may have been this species. Other sightings attributed to this species were recorded by Captain Salwegter in the Indonesian archipelago as follows:

Number	Position	Date	Sea temp. °C
4	8°05'N 125°33'E	16 Jul 85	28
23	7°56'N 122°00'E	17 Jul 85	28
6	7°55'N 117°32'E	18 Jul 85	28

In correspondence, identification details were noted as: sooty brown with a lighter brown stripe on the wing. No white tail patch. Following in the wake their flight and behaviour was like a low flying swallow but with slower turnings. When in company with Wilson's they looked a bit larger. These details however do not conclusively exclude possibility of Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*.

TROPIC-BIRDS PHAETHONTIDAE

Red-billed Tropic-bird *Phaethon aethereus*. A single adult at 26°N 40°18'W on 22 Jan 85 (WW).

Red-tail Tropic-bird *Phaethon rubricauda*. One immature tropic-bird possibly of this species at 40°N 154°W on 2 Aug 85 and another at 40°N 162°30'W next day (JWW).

White-tailed Tropic-bird *Phaethon lepturus*. In the Indian Ocean one adult showing an overall golden yellow cast to the plumage as *P.l. fulvus* noted by PCD at 6°30'S 105°30'E on 24 Feb 85. In the North Atlantic outside of the tropics seen as follows: one at 28°28'N 51°00'W on 20 Apr 85 (MGW), 3 off Bermuda on 4 Apr (RLW) and two at 24°16'N 69°34'W on 10 Jun 85 (RLW), and two probable *lepturus* following R.F.A. *Olna* at 48°11'N 28°16'W on 10 Jun 85 (WRPB).

GANNETS AND BOOBIES SULIDAE

Northern Gannet *Sula bassana*. Single immatures at 47°N 21°W and 43°N 46°W in May 84 (MGK). A concentration of birds of mixed ages at 50°N 8°W on 20 Sep 84 (MGK). Four immatures in Strait of Gibraltar on 1 Mar 85 (RLW). A single immature off Algiers on 5 Feb 85 (WW). Seven at 39°52'N 11°36'W on 22 Oct 85 (PM).

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*. On voyage from Cape Town to Jeddah RRW noted 300, commenting that there were many around the ship and on the Haycock Island (12°32'N 42°37'E) on 10 Nov 84. Many adults and some immatures followed catching flying fish disturbed by the vessel's passage, at 10°N 86°30'W on 11 Jan 85 (WW). Unlike Pomarine Skuas which catch the fish above the water, these were taken as they reached the water surface and they sometimes escaped when the birds disturbed each other.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*. Crossing the Pacific Ocean MGF provided good details of three birds perched on the rigging at 18°N 118°W on 27 Dec 84.

FRIGATEBIRDS *FREGATIDAE*

Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila*. A single bird 280' SW of Ascension Island on 27 Aug 85 (BB).

PHALAROPES *PHALAROPODIDAE*

Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*. Fifteen at 33°N 128°E on 8 Apr 83 (PWGC). Over 1,000 at 52°N 51°W on 15 Sep 84 (MGK).

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*. Large numbers wintering close off the coast of South Yemen from 14°49'N 50°15'E to the Red Sea entrance. None seen in the Red Sea or Gulf of Suez, Dec 84 (DMS).

SKUAS *STERCORARIIDAE*

South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*. A pale bodied skua, probably of this species, was noted from R.F.A. *Olna* at 46°05'N 37°56'W on 9 Jun 85 (WRPB).

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*. In the Indian Ocean two at 4°S 118°E on 31 Mar 83 (PWGC). Total of 17 in the approach to the Belle Isle Strait on 15 Sep 84 (MGK). In the tropical Atlantic WW saw many daily from 11°21'N 17°13'W on 1 Mar 85 to about 4°41'N 1°44'W off Lagos and many about 25' off Point Durnford with increasing numbers in the vicinity of fishing vessels on 16 Mar and several large groups at 19°53'N 17°29'W next day.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*. Total of eight with other skuas at 51°N 54°W on 15 Aug 84 (MGK).

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*. Total of 17 with other skuas and chasing Kittiwakes in the approaches to the Belle Isle Strait on 15 Aug 84 (MGK).

GULLS *LARIDAE*

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*. During Nov 85 in the south Norwegian Sea NWC on board H.M.S. *Beaver* noted birds as follows: one at 59°18'N 8°36'W, 4 at 59°58'N 7°50'W, 5 at 61°20'N 3°05'W and 4 at 62°43'N 01°34'W.

Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens*. Two at 44°N 138°W on 14 Dec 84 (JWW).

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*. In the Gulf of Suez DMS noted that this gull was by far the most numerous bird in Ras Shukheir Bay through Jan 85 and that even at the beginning of that month one or two birds displayed full black hoods of breeding plumage and many more so by the month's end. Many of the gulls were badly stained with oil and certainly there is a pollution problem here which may account for the scarcity of terns and other diving birds.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*. A single adult at 49°N 4°W on 18 May 84 (MGK). Three adults in winter plumage following astern in the Baltic Sea at 54°44'N 12°30'E on 1 Dec 85.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*. Crossing the Atlantic one immature at 24°27'N 45°24'W on 21 Jan 85, three at 26°04'N 40°18'W next day and two at 27°37'N 34°58'W on 23 Jan 85 and several small groups on the high sea when approaching the Strait of Gibraltar (WW). Several large concentrations with a preponderance of immatures during the day south to 18°N 17°33'W on 17 Feb 85 (WW). A single immature at 11°21'N 17°13'W on 1 Mar 85 (WW). In the Pacific several small groups of adults and immatures at 36°N 122°W on 2 Jan 85 (WW).

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*. Single adult birds in the North Atlantic as follows: 53°N 42°W on 16 Aug, 52°N 24°W on 18 Aug and 52°N 18°W on 19 Aug 84 (MGK). Three at 45°50'N 7°42'W on 2 Nov 82 and 2 immatures at 25°32'N 21°15'W on 23 Dec 84 (PM).

TERNs STERNIDAE

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*. Reports of birds around North Africa illustrate extent of the wintering area of this tern, eg. a few at Oran anchorage and harbour on 30-31 Jan (WW), small groups at Dakar on 18-28 Feb 85 (WW), ten at Salalah harbour, Oman on 12 Sep 85 (MGW) and at Skikda, Algeria and Gibraltar in Dec 85 (SEC).

AUKS ALCIDAE

Little Auk *Alle alle*. Single birds at 45°N 53°W on 24 May 84 and at 50°N 59°W on 14 Aug 84 (MGK). One at 55°24'N 16°09'W on 2 Jun 85 (RCLA).

Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*. One at 45°N 52°W on 24 May 84 (MGK).

Tufted Puffin *Lunda cirrhata*. One at 43°N 167°E on 22 Dec 84 (JWW). Several small groups during the day totalling about 30 at 36°N 122°W on 2 Jan 85 (WW).

SEABIRDS EXAMINED IN THE HAND 1984/85

SPECIES	OBSERVER	DATE	LOCATION	SEA TEMP	LENGTH	WINGSPAN	NOTES
			Lat/Long	°C	mm	mm	
Antarctic Petrel <i>Thalassoica antarctica</i>	A. R. Louch	28 Feb 85	63°34'S 41°16'W	0.8	390	880	Found dead on deck 3 Mar. Possibly arrived on 28 Feb at position indicated.
Kerguelen Petrel <i>Pterodroma brevirostris</i>	A. R. Louch	25 Mar 85	61°53'S 37°14'W	0.2	350	740	Attracted by lights. One of two found dazed on deck.
Prion sp. <i>Pachyptila sp.</i>	A. R. Louch	19 Mar 85	61°00'S 27°10'W	0.6	350	?	Measurements and description not conclusive as to species.
White-chinned Petrel <i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>	P. D. Williams	21 Apr 85	probably Grytviken S. Georgia	—	525	1217	Found dead on return to Falklands. Another live bird released.
Wedge-tailed Shearwater <i>Puffinus pacificus</i>	B. A. Mullan	8 Jul 85	25°00'N 123°20'E	28.0	330	850	Picked up in swimming pool. Dark phase in region where max. concentration of pale phase occurs (see photo p.14).
Storm-petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	A. R. Louch	20 Sep 84	41°30'N 13°28'W	21.0	145	220?	Found exhausted in scupper.
Leach's Petrel <i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	A. R. Louch	30 Nov 83	0°13'N 17°05'W	24.9	182 168	312 310	Two of several which came on board when vessel stopped with deck lighting on. Indistinguishable from Madeiran Storm-petrel.
Sooty Tern <i>Sterna fuscata</i>	P. C. Dyer	22 Feb 85	7°00'S 106°00'E	24.0	330	830	Immature
Little Auk <i>Alle alle</i>	A. R. Louch	27 Apr 83	51°04'N 12°55'W	11.7	210	?	Attaining summer plumage. Hole in web of foot.



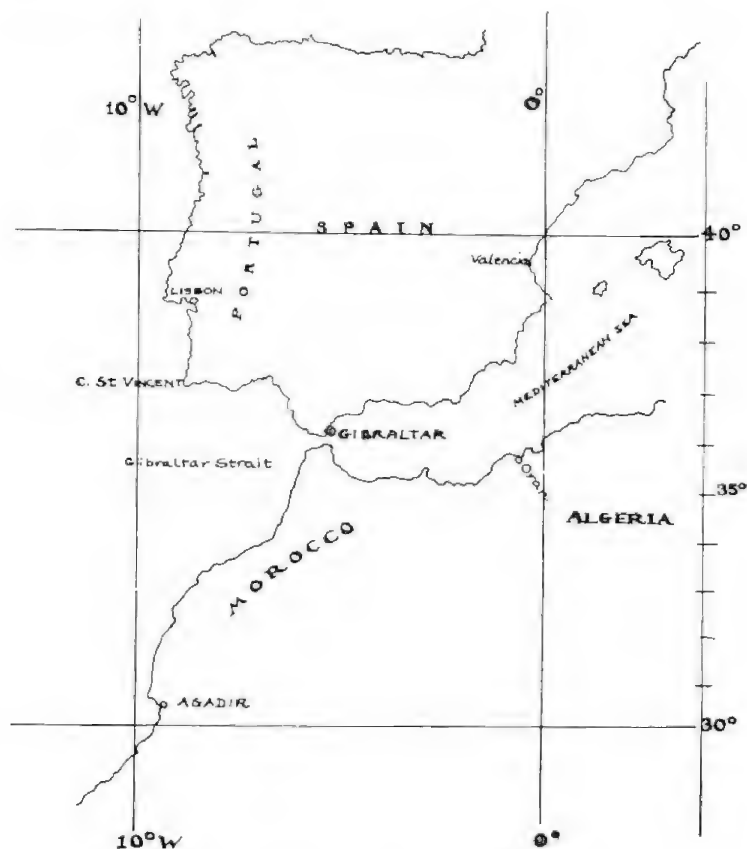
Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*
Photo: B. A. Mullan

SEABIRD RECORDS FROM THE APPROACHES TO THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR

By Dr E. F. J. Garcia

Seabirds are an invariable feature of a journey through the Strait of Gibraltar or its approaches because this area provides good feeding opportunities all year round as well as being a focus for their seasonal movements. However, as elsewhere, probably only full-time observers have the opportunity and inclination to record everything seen. This account is written with the aim of helping marine observers in this area to decide which of their sightings are particularly important and so should be recorded and submitted to the Society. I have therefore tried to point out the more obvious gaps in current knowledge. Still, it has to be stressed that all records are useful, not least because numbers and routes change so that well-established information often needs updating.

The sea area covered is that between latitudes 30°N and 40°N, and between longitudes 0° and 10°W (see Map). This is roughly the area between Lisbon and Agadir in the west and Valencia and Oran in the east. All the species known or believed to occur here regularly are mentioned. They include four petrels which are rarely recorded but which breed as close as Madeira and the Canaries (referred to together as the 'Atlantic islands') and so may be expected occasionally in the western approaches especially. Obviously, any species seen which is not included here is a vagrant and is particularly worth noting. A brief description of the known status of the different species within this sea area (only) is given, as an additional guide to what is possibly unseasonal or otherwise unusual.



Map: Approaches to Strait of Gibraltar
C. R. Casement

SPECIES	KNOWN LOCAL STATUS	RECORDS PARTICULARLY REQUIRED
PETRELS & SHEARWATERS		
Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Vagrant.	All records.
Soft-plumaged Petrel <i>Pterodroma mollis</i>	Small numbers breed Atlantic Islands. Pelagic reports rare.	All records.
Bulwer's Petrel <i>Bulweria bulwerii</i>	Breeds Atlantic islands. Pelagic reports rare. Two recent records in inshore Spanish Mediterranean waters (<i>Ardeola</i> 32 (1985): 139).	All records.
Cory's Shearwater <i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	Numerous. Most move to southern hemisphere in winter but some are present all year. Breeds Berlengas, Chafarinas.	All winter records (late November - early February) of substantial numbers (100+).
Great & Sooty Shearwaters <i>Puffinus gravis/Puffinus griseus</i>	Present in late summer/autumn in Atlantic waters.	All records in Strait and Mediterranean. Any records outside August-October.
Manx Shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	<i>P.p. puffinus</i> . Present in Atlantic, perhaps especially on passage to and from northern colonies. <i>P.p. yelkouan</i> (Levantine Shearwater). Present in Mediterranean mainly June-October, when formerly abundant in the Strait, but recently scarce.	All records, but especially in Strait and Mediterranean.
	<i>P.p. mauretanicus</i> (Balearic Shearwater). Present all year in Strait and Mediterranean. Some move into Atlantic, mainly July-November. May breed Chafarinas.	All Atlantic records. Any spring or winter records of substantial numbers (100+).
Little Shearwater <i>Puffinus assimilis</i>	Breeds Atlantic islands. Several recent pelagic and coastal records in the area.	All records.
STORM-PETRELS		
Wilson's Storm-petrel <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	Present in summer/autumn in Atlantic.	All records in Strait and Mediterranean. Any records of large numbers (50+).

SPECIES

White-faced Storm-petrel
Pelagodroma marina
Storm-petrel
Hydrobates pelagicus
Leach's Storm-petrel
Oceanodroma leucorhoa
Maderian Storm-petrel
Oceanodroma castro

CORMORANTS

Cormorant
Phalacrocorax carbo
Shag
Phalacrocorax aristotelis

PHALAROPES

Red-necked Phalarope
Phalaropus lobatus
Grey Phalarope
Phalaropus fulicarius

KNOWN LOCAL STATUS

Breeds Atlantic Islands. Pelagic reports rare.

Present all year but uncommon in winter. May breed locally.

Present in winter, entering Mediterranean chiefly after prolonged westerly gales.

Breeds Atlantic islands and recently found nesting within the area on the Farilhões (Berlengas Islands) (*Ibis* 125 (1983): 382-384). Pelagic records rare.

Present all year but most numerous in winter.

Breeds on south Moroccan Atlantic coast. Present more widely in winter in coastal waters.

Breeds in the area but locally declining.

Very seldom recorded.

Occurs irregularly off Atlantic coasts, especially during autumn passage. Some occur in winter.

RECORDS PARTICULARLY REQUIRED

All records.

All winter records (November-February). Any records of large numbers (50+).

All records in Strait and Mediterranean. Any records of large numbers (50+).

All records. Should be looked for off the Portuguese coast in summer.

All summer records (June-August) of other than individual birds. All records of large numbers (100+) in the Mediterranean.

All summer observations away from breeding colonies. Colony censuses. Any winter records of sizeable groups (10+).

All observations away from breeding colonies. Colony censuses. In the Strait all records outside the immediate vicinity of Gibraltar are of interest.

All records.

All records, especially of large numbers, and any in the Strait and Mediterranean.

SPECIES	KNOWN LOCAL STATUS	RECORDS PARTICULARLY REQUIRED
SKUAS		
Pomarine Skua <i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	Present chiefly on passage to and from tropical Atlantic.	All records in Strait and Mediterranean. All records in June-August and November-February.
Arctic & Great Skuas <i>S. parasiticus/Catharacta skua</i>	Present all year. Scarcest in summer.	All summer records (May-August), especially in Mediterranean. Any records of sizeable groups (5+) in Mediterranean.
Long-tailed Skua <i>S. longicaudus</i>	Migrates well off Atlantic coasts but few published records exist.	All records.
GULLS		
Mediterranean & Little Gulls <i>Larus melanocephalus/ Larus minutus</i>	Present chiefly in winter but also on passage.	All summer records (June-August). All pelagic records and of flocks of 10+.
Sabine's Gull <i>Larus sabini</i>	Migrant off Atlantic coasts but relatively few published records exist.	All records, but especially any in the Strait and Mediterranean.
Black-headed & Lesser Black-backed Gulls <i>Larus ridibundus/Larus fuscus</i>	Present all year but chiefly in winter. Black-headed Gull breeds locally on Spanish coast. Lesser Black-backed Gull has bred Portugal.	All summer records (June-July). All pelagic records.
Slender-billed Gull <i>Larus genei</i>	Breeds locally in south Spain. Few marine records.	All records.
Audouin's Gull <i>Larus audouinii</i>	Common migrant in Mediterranean and along Moroccan Atlantic coast and in the Strait. Breeds off Moroccan Mediterranean and Algerian coasts.	All winter records (November-February). All pelagic records. Colony censuses. Records of migrants are useful, particularly of those on spring passage (late February-May) for which there are relatively few observations.
Common & Great Black-backed Gulls <i>Larus canus/Larus marinus</i>	Rare, chiefly in winter.	All records, especially in the Strait and Mediterranean.

SPECIES	KNOWN LOCAL STATUS	RECORDS PARTICULARLY REQUIRED
Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	Numerous local breeding species is the yellow-legged subspecies (<i>L.a.michahellis</i>). Present all year.	All pelagic records. All records of pink-legged subspecies (<i>L.a.argenteus</i> , etc.).
Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Common, chiefly in winter. Largest numbers in the Mediterranean occur after prolonged westerly gales. Some breed Portugal.	All summer records (May-September). All records of large numbers (50+) in the Strait and Mediterranean. Colony censuses.
TERNs		
Gull-billed Tern <i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	Several breeding colonies in Spain. Marine records scarce although there is movement through the Strait chiefly in March-April (east) and July-September (west).	All records.
Caspian Tern <i>Sterna caspia</i>	Present on passage and in winter, but scarce.	All records.
Royal Tern <i>Sterna maxima</i>	Present in small numbers along Moroccan Atlantic coast north to the Strait, chiefly July-October but relatively little-documented.	All records.
Lesser Crested Tern <i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	Small passage along Moroccan coasts and through the Strait, mainly in September-October and May but relatively few published records exist.	All records.
Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	Common on all coasts in winter and on passage.	All summer records (May-August).
Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>	Passage migrant but relatively seldom reported.	All records, especially any in Mediterranean.
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Common on passage on all coasts. Breeds at the Guadalquivir estuary, Spain.	All records outside March-May and August-October.
Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisea</i>	Common on passage in Atlantic.	All records in Strait and Mediterranean. All records outside mid-March-May and August-October.

SPECIES	KNOWN LOCAL STATUS	RECORDS PARTICULARLY REQUIRED
Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Breeds very locally on all coasts. Fairly common on passage.	All records outside April-May and August-October. Any records of sizeable groups (10+).
Whiskered Tern <i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	Breeds Spain and recorded on passage on all coasts but marine occurrences are poorly-documented.	All records.
Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>	Numerous on passage along coasts and in the Strait. Breeds Spain.	All records outside April-May and August-October. Details of movements (numbers, direction, etc.) are worth recording since they appear to be complex.
White-winged Black Tern <i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	Occurs on passage but rare.	All records.
AUKS		
Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>	Very few now breed Portugal. Occurs in winter off southwest Iberia but little-documented in this area.	All records, but especially in the Strait and Mediterranean.
Razorbill & Puffin <i>Alca torda/Fratercula arctica</i>	Numerous, chiefly in winter. Large movements occur through the Strait, chiefly February-May (west) and October-December (east).	All summer records (May-September). All records of sizeable concentrations (50+) in winter.

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CONSERVATION PROBLEMS IN THE
FALKLAND ISLANDS
AND THE ROLE OF THE
FALKLAND ISLANDS FOUNDATION

By Simon Lyster, Hon. Secretary, F.I.F.

While penguin watching one summer's afternoon on New Island in 1979, Sir Peter Scott, Richard and Maisie Fitter, Ian and Maria Strange (owners of half of New Island) and Michael Wright of World Wildlife Fund-US, decided to form a charitable organisation through which efforts to protect the Falklands' unique wildlife could be channelled. The result of their inspiration was the Falkland Islands Foundation of which Sir Peter became chairman. At the time, of course, nobody had any idea that the Falkland Islands would soon become an international battleground and that threats to wildlife would take on a new intensity, but in retrospect the establishment of F.I.F. could hardly have been more timely. The events of 1982, which rudely transformed the Falklands from a peaceful agricultural backwater into a bustling military stronghold, miraculously caused minimal direct damage to wildlife but greatly increased the need for urgent conservation measures to ensure that the spectacular breeding colonies of penguins and albatrosses, and the rest of the Islands' fauna and flora, would still exist for future generations to enjoy.

Currently, the most pressing conservation need is for controls on offshore fishing. There has been a massive escalation in the numbers of fishing vessels, particularly squid jiggers, operating in Falklands' waters over the last 3 years as a consequence of the refusal of the British Government to declare a 200 mile fisheries zone around the Islands. The biggest increase in fishing effort has come from the Japanese, Taiwanese, Spanish and South Korean vessels which are catching squid. The Poles and Russians also have large fishing fleets in the area but their main target is blue whiting and Patagonian hake. The fishing is not only threatening fish stocks but may also adversely affect seabird populations, particularly Rockhopper Penguins. Squid fishing is the main cause for concern because squid forms a substantial part of the diet of Rockhopper Penguins and Black-browed Albatross. Other birds may also feed on squid but so little research has been done into the diets of Falklands' seabirds that this whole subject is clouded with uncertainty. In October 1986 the Falkland Islands Foundation will be commencing a two-year research project into the diets and populations of Falklands' seabirds in order to assess the threats to them from commercial fisheries and to be in a position to advise what levels of fishing and in what areas are acceptable from a seabird point of view. The research will also mark the start of a long-term monitoring programme



A tussock island

Photo: Simon Lyster

There are indications that Rockhopper Penguins may already be suffering. It has been a bad breeding season for them in some areas — on West Point Island the breeding success was reported to be zero — and unusually high numbers of dead Rockhopper have been found at many different locations. Post-mortems carried out by Dr. Ian Keymour in the U.K. suggested they died of starvation. Dr. Keymour found no signs of infectious disease, although tests for toxicity have not been completed. Although numbers of dead penguins found were initially in hundreds rather than thousands, over 3,000 dead Rockhoppers were counted in one rookery on New Island on 25 May, weeks after the birds should have left for the winter months at sea — a very worrying development. There is no proof that over-fishing has caused the penguins to die of starvation but it is clearly a strong possibility.

I have already mentioned how little research work has been done on Falklands' birds. The F.I.F. is undertaking a survey of breeding birds to help in this activity, and it is in this area that members of the Royal Naval Bird Watching Society can be of most assistance. Printed forms to help in this activity are available from the Local R.N.B.W.S. Representative (see inside rear cover of *Sea Swallow*), from the Military Conservation Officer in the Falklands, or from the Falkland Islands Trust, a local conservation group in

Stanley which administers the survey, or from the Chairman, R.N.B.W.S. Please collect some forms and fill in as many as you can. Complete a separate form for each place you visit in the Islands. We are particularly anxious to collect records from the more obscure islands other bird watchers may not have visited, but records from any site are more than welcome. Slowly we hope to build up an "Atlas" of Falkland Islands' birds by this means.

F.I.F. has also produced tussac island survey forms, and we would also appreciate help in completing these, particularly from uninhabited islands. The primary focus of these forms is on the condition of tussac and on the presence or absence of introduced predators, particularly rats and mice. The latter can be a serious menace to tussac birds and the smaller passerines.

A number of educational materials for the military and local children, including a poster on Falklands' wildlife that is available free of charge to all servicemen, have also been produced. We have bought or leased 18 tussac islands in the Falklands during the last two years. These are managed as nature reserves, and we hope to acquire more islands for similar purposes in the future.

If you are interested in joining the Falkland Islands Foundation and helping our conservation work, please contact the Hon. Secretary, c/o World Wildlife Fund-UK, Panda House, 11-13 Ockford Road, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1QU (Tel.: 04868 20551). The cost is £10 per annum, and members receive a Newsletter twice a year.

STOP PRESS. PENGUIN DEATHS — NEWS UPDATE

Dr. Ian Keymer has since discovered higher than expected concentrations of lead in the liver and kidneys of the Rockhopper bodies that he examined. Contrary to his original findings that the birds were not suffering from any disease, Dr Keymer now suspects that many of them may have been affected by a seabird disease known as Puffinosis, although he cannot confirm this without further examinations in the field. While neither the lead nor the Puffinosis are likely to have been enough to kill adult Rockhoppers, he thinks the combination of the two may have weakened them sufficiently for them not to be able to feed properly. Dr Keymer believes other factors, such as shortage of food, may also be involved although again these require further investigation in the field.

SOUTH ATLANTIC BIRD ISLANDS

By W. R. P. Bourne and W. F. Curtis

There are comparatively few islands in the South Atlantic compared with the far-flung archipelagoes of other oceans. They are in most cases extremely isolated, and were originally remarkable for the occurrence of vast seabird colonies and distinct forms of endemic landbird, although they have now usually been devastated by man and introduced animals. Most are described by R. C. Murphy in the introduction to *The Oceanic Birds of South America* (2 vols., New York, 1936), recently brought up to date in contributions by A. J. Williams and J. P. Croxall *et al.* in *I.C.B.P. Technical Publication 2*. The recent outburst of ornithological activity in the South Atlantic discussed in connection with observations at sea last year (*Sea Swallow* 34:18-38) has also provided a certain number of opportunities for observations ashore, even if they were not as many as we could have wished, and we are summarising the information now available for these sites at greater length this year.

Since last year we have received observations from the South Atlantic by the following major observers, subsequently referred to by their initials:

C.P.O. Yeoman B. Bewsher, R.F.A. *Regent*, August-November 1985, including a visit to South Georgia in early October. R.F.A. *Olmeda* in transit to Cape Horn, April 1986.

Ship's Surgeon W. R. P. Bourne, R.F.A. *Resource*, February-May 1986.

Senior Radio Officer W. F. Curtis, R.F.A. *Sir Bedivere*, February 1986 onwards, with six visits to South Georgia in late February, mid-March, April-May, early and late June, and July-August.

Third Officer A. R. Louch, R.R.S. *Discovery*, a research cruise from Punta Arenas to the Weddell Sea, visiting South Georgia, and then returning to U.K. via the Scotia Sea and Montevideo, February-May 1985.

Lt. C. A. Snow, H.M.S. *Birmingham*, observations including a visit to South Georgia, October-November 1985.

Mr T. Wachter, a return trip on S.S. *Uganda* from Ascension to the Falklands, November 1984.

Second Officer P. D. Williams, M.V. *Scottish Eagle*, regular observations at anchor in San Carlos Water, March-June 1985, with a visit to South Georgia in late April.

Mr R. W. Woods, a voyage from Ascension to the Falklands in S.S. *Uganda* in August and September returning in S.S. *Keren* in November 1983.

OBSERVATIONS AT SEA

The observations at sea do not add greatly to the outline given last year, so we will merely summarise the highlights before reviewing the information available for the islands. The main new contribution is by ARL, who reports that he saw the Wandering and Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses *Diomedea exulans* and *Phoebastria palpebrata*, Southern Giant, White-chinned and Blue Petrels *Macronectes gigantea*, *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, and *Halobaena caerulea*, and prions *Pachyptila* sp. south to 68°00'S 30°31'W in the

Weddell Sea on 15 February, with Black-browed Albatrosses *Diomedea melanophris* and Kerguelen Petrels *Pterodroma brevirostris* regularly, and Sooty Albatrosses *Phoebastria fusca* and Soft-plumaged and White-headed Petrels *Pterodroma mollis* and *P. lessonii* occasionally south of 60°S, and a Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* at 66°35'S 33°04'W on 14 February and a Great Shearwater *P. gravis* at 63°30'S 41°43'S on 27 February. We need more notes on the identification and distribution of the subtropical species reported at intervals by a variety of different people in these southern waters.

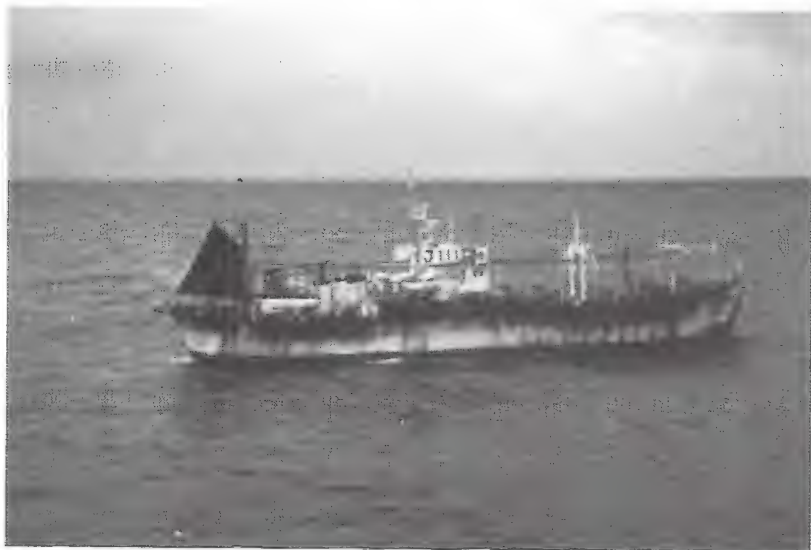
The southern summer of 1985-86 was unusually warm and dry in the Falklands, where fires lit to remove the dry grass escaped control and burnt for months in the peat, laying waste areas of up to 6000 acres in West Falkland. There also appears to have been a failure of the food supply for some of the seabirds, especially the Rockhopper Penguins *Eudyptes chrysocome*, whose chicks were found to be starving at the colonies when they were due to fledge in February (*Falkland Island Foundation Newsletter* 5:2-4). Unusual numbers of adults were also seen inshore, with occasional dead bodies from 22 February, and a maximum of 23 in a day off the north-east coast on 29 March. It seems possible that the fine summer may have affected the growth of the plankton; thus for example lobster-krill *Munida gregaria* (*Sea Swallow* 24:22-23) caught in ships' cooling water intakes at San Carlos Water at this time were larger but contained much less meat than specimens taken there a year before. There has also been considerable discussion whether the birds' food supply may have been depleted by the growing numbers of Oriental vessels catching squid out at sea under bright lights at night over the last three years. But the penguins are said to take a different genus of squid however, and started declining on Campbell Island in the Pacific over forty years ago, before the start of the squid fishery (P. J. Moors, *Polar Record* 23:69-73).

In view of the Rockhoppers' decline it is important to know where they spend the winter, and Mr Moors has pointed out that so far the only evidence for this is two observations of birds seen out at sea which we published last year, so it may be useful to examine them in more detail. The first involved a poor view of four birds seen in fog while crossing the Falkland Escarpment where the sea floor rises from 6000m to 2500m and the water temperature fell from 8.3 to 7.0°C at 48°54'S 50°38'W about 300nm north-east of the Falklands on 26 August 1983. The second involved a better view of six birds where the water temperature fluctuated from 10.1 to 8.3 and back to 11.1°C over the course of eight hours while crossing the subtropical convergence at 43°26'S 43°56'W further north on 14 September 1984. Third Officer R. K. Q. Butler has since also seen nine penguins, some of which had yellow on the head and some white eyestripes, so that there may also have been Magellan Penguins *Spheniscus magellanicus*, over the course of seventy

minutes where there was a sudden rise in water temperature from 8.6 to 10.2°C at 47°50'S 53°46'W when sailing north in much the same area as the first record on 16 November 1985.

This suggests that while some Rockhopper Penguins remain in Falkland waters in the winter, many may disperse north in the area where fluctuating water temperatures indicate front-formation leading to a concentration of food along the outer borders of the continental shelf and Falkland Current to the northern boundary of the cool water at the subtropical convergence. An Oriental squid-jigger was seen at 40°46'S 45°48'W where the water temperature rose from 14.4 to 20.0°C over 24 hours while crossing this last area on 9 April 1986, so that apparently squid are also being caught here as well.

The warm weather also appears to have been associated with a southward movement of subtropical seabirds. By February Great Shearwaters were present in hundreds, Soft-plumaged Petrels in tens, and there were occasional Grey Petrels *Procellaria cinerea*, recorded for the first time last year, out at sea off both the Falklands and South Georgia. WFC also saw the first Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* for the Falklands 8nm east of Volunteer Point on 5 March, with two Little Shearwaters *Puffinus assimilis* at 52°21'S 50°20'W on the way to South Georgia on 10 March, and WRPB saw the first certain Little Shearwater for the Falklands at 50°08'S 57°03'W, 85nm north-east of Volunteer Point, on 3 April.



Oriental squid-jigger

Photo: W. R. P. Bourne

He also saw the first certain South Polar Skua *Catharacta macrorhynchos* in Port William on 21 February, and WFC has since seen three more, with the first Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* off West Point Island on 5 April, the first Band-tailed Gull *Larus belcheri* at Albemarle next day, and the first recorded Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora* and Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* among other species listed later off South Georgia.

THE GULF OF GUINEA

There are apparently a number of seabird colonies which have never been properly investigated on outlying rocks around a chain of volcanic islands which have now secured self-government extending south-west into the Gulf of Guinea, including Macias Nguema Biyogo (Fernando Poo), Principé, S. Thomé, and Pagalu (Annobon). R. de Naurois (*Bonn zool. Beitr.* 34:129-148) reports that they certainly include White-tailed Tropic-birds *Phaethon lepturus*, Brown Boobies *Sula leucogaster*, Sooty Terns *Sterna fuscata*, and Brown and Black Noddies *Anous stolidus* and *A. minutus*. Madeiran Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma castro* have also been collected, and Audubon's Shearwaters *Puffinus lherminieri* and Bridled Terns *Sterna anaethetus* reported at sea, in this area, where large flocks of terns and seabirds gather to feed over the Guinea Current (G. C. Cadée, *Ardea* 69:211-216).

ST. PAUL'S ROCKS

These are a group of some eight bare rocks thrust up from the mid-Atlantic ridge at 0°55'N 29°21'W, described by R. S. Mackinnon in *Sea Swallow* 15:53-55. The information about their birds is reviewed by members of a Cambridge expedition in September 1979 (A. J. Edwards, K. Wilson and H. R. Lubbock, *Ibis* 123:233-238), who reported a stable population of some hundreds of nesting Brown Boobies and Brown and Black Noddies. It seems likely that a good many other transequatorial migrants pass by unrecorded, possibly lingering in this area to feed over the equatorial counter-current (which flows east to form the Guinea Current), where it would also be useful to have more observations.

FERNANDO DE NORONHA

This group consists of a volcanic island 7km long and some 330m high with a dozen outlying islets located at 3°50'S 32°25'W to the south-west of the preceding site. It was used over a long period as a Brazilian penal settlement, and there has been some concern over the welfare of its birds. It was visited by Storrs Olson in July and August 1973 (*National Geographic Society Research Report*, 13:481-492). Olson found that the three landbirds (including an endemic species of vireo and race of tyrant flycatcher, and a small dove also found on the mainland) and the usual tropical Atlantic seabirds (some of which also breed on Rocas Reef 80nm to the west)

survive in fair numbers despite the presence of about 1,200 people. He discovered the bones of an extinct endemic rail and rodent. It would be useful to have more observations.

ASCENSION

This is an arid volcanic island 12km across and 859m high which has recently become familiar as the main British staging-post to the South Atlantic, with a transient staff of about 2,000 people. Its birds are described by Bernard Stonehouse in his account of the British Ornithologists' Union centenary expedition to this island and St. Helena in 1957-59, *Wideawake Island* (Hutchinson, 1960), and in special number 103b of the *Ibis*. An excellent general guide, *The Ascension Island Handbook* by J. E. Packer, including maps and lists of plants and birds, is available from the local Historical Society. The botany has recently been reviewed by Dr. Q. C. B. Cronk (*Biological Conservation* 17:207-219). An assessment of the current state of the island will be found in *R.A.F. Ornithological Society Newsletter* 39:32-34. The main recent development has been the appearance of the first House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, presumably off a ship or aircraft, at Christmas 1985, followed by the introduction of others "to keep it company". More information is needed about the current impact of feral cats on the huge colony of Sooty Terns *Sterna fuscata* which nest every 9.6 months at "Wideawake Fair" south of the airfield, (where they are breeding at the time of writing in April 1986), and about the welfare of the other seabirds, and especially the endemic Ascension Frigate-bird *Fregata aquila*, which nest on Boatswainbird Island and other stacks offshore. These stacks can easily be inspected by visiting ships' boats, as described by Captain P. J. Rose in *Sea Swallow* 23:25-28. Captain M. G. T. Harris and a party from H.M.S. *Cardiff* found the birds still flourishing and noticed that the Brown Boobies had chicks when they also visited Boatswainbird Island on 17 July 1982. It would be particularly useful to have more information about the breeding dates for the Black Noddies, which may also have an unusual breeding cycle. A list of birds recorded on and around the island will be published elsewhere.

ST. HELENA

St. Helena is another volcanic island some 16.5km long and 824m high with a population of about 5,000 people lying at 16°S 6°W. Its remarkable wildlife suffered even more severely than elsewhere when the island was made a British staging-post on the route to India in 1659, and at least nine endemic birds may have been wiped out with the destruction of its forests, leaving only a native plover, the Wirebird *Charadrius sanctaehelenae*, which has occupied the cleared land, and widespread or introduced species. Recent investigations by Dr. Q. C. B. Cronk (*Biological Conservation* 26:163-174, 35:159-186) have shown that a few native trees have survived, however, and some of the more elusive

seabirds, notably an ally of the Mascarene Petrel *Pterodroma aterrima* only known from bones, *P. rupinarum*, and the boobies which have been reported at sea again in recent years, might also survive on the cliffs or two rocks offshore. A useful recent list of the birds by J. C. den Hartog (*Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 104:91-95) unfortunately perpetuates some long-standing confusion over the southern petrels which occur offshore, sometimes listed as Snow Petrels *Pagodroma nivea*, and now the equally unlikely Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*, when they were originally reported as Southern Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialisoides*. The records of the Cape Pigeon *Daption capense* also appear to have been combined with those of the Cape Hen or White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*. There is a soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* taken near St. Helena in August 1903 in the Berlin Museum, and WFC saw four more and eight Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisea* to the SSW at 19°S 7°W on 10 April 1973, and two Long-tailed and 37 Pomarine Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus* and *S. pomarinus* offshore on 21 November 1974 (*Sea Swallow* 26:13-14).

ILHA DA TRINDADE (SOUTH TRINIDAD)

This is also a volcanic island 6.5km long and 595m high lying at 20°30'S 29°20'W which now has a Brazilian weather and communications station staffed by forty people. It was also visited by Storrs Olson (*loc. cit.*) during December 1975-February 1976. He found that the native forest had been destroyed by fire, and regeneration prevented by goats, although the main tree (identified as *Colubrina glandulosa*) and tree-ferns still survive at high levels. Cats, mice and the Saffron Finch *Sicalis flaveola* were present, with legions of land-crabs *Geocarcinus lagostomus*, which he suggests may be responsible for the absence of many small petrels on the tropical Atlantic islands. He found Herald or Trindade Petrels *Pterodroma arminjoniana* still fairly numerous, although most of the seabirds, including two others which also now only breed here in the Atlantic, the Greater and Lesser Frigate-birds *Fregata minor* and *F. ariel*, are much reduced. It would be very interesting to know more about the situation on the uninhabited and inadequately explored Martin Vas rocks 30nm to the east.

THE TRISTAN-GOUGH GROUP

The birds of the Tristan-Gough group have recently been reviewed by Dr M. E. Richardson in special number 12(2) of *Cormorant*. The islands were originally covered with an impenetrable tangle of fern-bush at lower levels and marshy moorland in the hills. Tristan da Cunha itself is a huge volcano 11km across and 2066m high lying at 37°05'S 12°17'W. It now has a population of several hundred people engaged in catching and processing crayfish, and has been largely devastated by introduced predators and herbivores and the wildlife over-exploited. Huge numbers of birds

and a rapidly recovering seal population still inhabit rugged Gough Island 220nm to the south-east, which is 13km long and 910m high, although the smaller species may already be affected by the introduction of mice, and could suffer much more severely from the possible appearance of rats following the arrival of crayfishermen from Tristan and the establishment of a South African weather Station (*Oryx* 20:79-86). Fortunately small Nightingale and Inaccessible Islands 2-3km across and 700m high which lie close together some 25nm to the south-west of Tristan appear to have escaped permanent damage. It would be useful to have more notes on the wildlife and the vast numbers of birds that can still be seen offshore.

THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

The Falklands differ from most of the previous groups in consisting of raised, folded and faulted sedimentary rocks covered in bare, barren, peaty or marshy moorland now grazed by sheep, with many outlying islets clothed in tall tussock grass, now often unfortunately over-run with introduced foxes, cats, and rodents. Their birds are described in an excellent book *The Birds of the Falkland Islands* by Robin W. Woods which is unfortunately out of print, though he has replaced it with a useful short field guide *Falkland Island Birds* (Anthony Nelson, Oswestry). Although the archipelago is nearly 200km across there is still only a short length of proper road over very difficult terrain, so that most transport is by boat and air. Unfortunately, exploration by the many interested servicemen who have recently visited the islands has been rather strictly confined "in the interests of conservation" to a few comparatively well-known holiday centres. In consequence they have been unable to make much original contribution to knowledge of the local birds ashore, although the situation is rather different at sea, as summarised in *Falkland Island Foundation Newsletter* 4:2-4. Travelling clockwise around the islands notable excursions include:

Organised helicopter trips mainly at week-ends to visit the King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus* colonies on Volunteer and Cow beaches in the north-east, with a wide variety of other birds on the lagoons inland.

Rambles east along the shore at Stanley to watch shorebirds in the Canache and Surf Bay and penguins on the far side of the Pembroke peninsula, west to look at scavengers on the town dump and waterbirds at Moody Brook, and inland to look at birds breeding on Stanley Common.

Alternative organised helicopter trips and sometimes longer visits to Sea Lion Island off the south-east coast, with its Elephant Seals and a wide variety of breeding sea, water and land birds. Visits by ships to Lively and Speedwell Islands, Port Albemarle, Port Stephens and Cape Orford further west along this coast have also proved very productive.

Postings to the military camp at Goose Green, with opportunities to explore the hinterland, observe the wildfowl which appear to commute between Burntside Pond and Camilla Creek in the winter, and make trips by scouting helicopters to Fox Bay and other sites in West Falkland.

Day trips from passing vessels and longer visits to several outlying western islands, including Weddell Settlement, with penguins and a hilly hinterland infested with foxes. New Island with its albatross, penguin and prion colonies, rat-free Carcass Island with further seabird colonies and innumerable small birds, and Pebble Island with many water birds.

Excursions from the anchorage at San Carlos Water and associated base at Kelly's Garden south to the inlets and ridges surrounding San Carlos Settlement and Ajax Bay, and north to the seabird colonies on Fanning Head and Island and water-bird concentrations up the San Carlos river and over the ridge around Middle Bay.

Occasional favoured individuals have also visited the nature reserves out at sea on Beauchêne Island to the south and the Jasons to the north-west, with their huge penguin, albatross and petrel colonies frequented by breeding Striated Caracaras *Phalacrocorax australis*, but this has been denied to most people. Few or no servicemen have even reached the main shearwater colony in the nature reserve on Kidney Island close to Stanley in the east. Until recently little attempt has been made to collect their observations either, except where the Falkland Island Trust have circulated questionnaires on breeding birds and tussock islands, but Shane Wolsey now hopes to produce a quarterly newsletter and revive the Trust's report *Warrah*, and records should be sent to him at 26 Endurance Avenue, Stanley, in future.

SOUTH GEORGIA AND THE SHAG ROCKS

The favourite recreation for naturalists posted to the Falklands is a trip on one of the vessels visiting South Georgia, 750nm to the ESE beyond the Antarctic convergence, where the big hills and really severe weather begin, and a number of accounts of visits have already appeared in *Sea Swallow* (15:43-49, 32:4-11, 33:37-39). On the way, the first attraction may be a view of the Shag Rocks, half a dozen stacks covered in seabirds lying 10nm to the south of the track 150nm west of the main island. In clear weather this is followed by the breath-taking spectacle of 170km of ice- and snow-clad mountains up to 2950m high as one passes through an endless array of seals and seabirds along half the north coast of the main island to the derelict whaling stations in Cumberland Bay and Leith Harbour. While few large ships go elsewhere, visitors are usually allowed a fairly free run of the hinterland, and many have been taken around the island with the helicopters supplying outlying detachments. The more interesting sites include:

The administrative headquarters at King Edward's Point lies next to the old whaling station at Grytviken in Cumberland Bay. In summer the shoreline is used by breeding Elephant Seals, and on 6 October 1985 BB counted 10 bulls, 140 cows, and 41 pups between the cemetery and Penguin River to the south, where it is usually also possible to see stray penguins. Brown Skuas *Catharacta skua*, Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* and Antarctic Terns *Sterna vittata* breed by the reservoir overlooking the whaling station and on the flats beyond Penguin River, and an endemic race of Yellow-billed Pintail *Anas georgica* and the Speckled Teal *A. flavirostris* nest around the Hamburg Lakes further up the valley, foregathering with the other birds along the shore in the winter. In the opposite direction Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses, Cape Pigeons and Imperial Shags *Phalacrocorax atriceps* nest on a grassy bluff along the shore beyond King Edward's Point, and Gentoo Penguins *Pygoscelis papua* among other species over the hill at the delightful rocky cove Maiviken, where there is a refuge in a cave. White-chinned Petrels *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, prions, storm- and diving-petrels also frequently come to the ships' lights on overcast nights, and probably also nest somewhere in the surrounding slopes and offshore islands, which need more investigation.

Along the coast to the west similar conditions occur around the complex of three old whaling stations in Leith Harbour. There are sometimes colonies of Gentoo Penguins at both Leith and Stromness, and Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses, White-chinned Petrels, Imperial Shags, and Brown Skuas breed on the Tonsberg Peninsula between Stromness and Husvik. Numbers of Black-bellied Storm-petrels *Fregetta tropica* and prions, including Slender-billed Prions *Pachyptila belcheri*, which have not been found breeding in South Georgia yet, have regularly been seen at sea and at lights at night off this coast, and might also nest somewhere in the area.

Among more distant sites only easily accessible by helicopter, the huge colony of King Penguins behind a magnificent beach frequented by many Elephant Seals at St. Andrew's Bay to the east, and the British Antarctic Survey's base at the most convenient seal and seabird breeding station on Bird Island off the west end of the main island, have been the subject of a number of films and reports, and are interesting to visit. But it should be stressed that there are innumerable other splendid sites all round the island which are in much greater need of further exploration.

TABLE 1

BIRDS RECORDED ON BOARD AT NIGHT AT SOUTH GEORGIA IN 1986

	13/3	14/3	15/3	2/5	3/5	4/5	Total	Wing	Bill	Tarsus	Fledge
	S	S	S	H	H	G					
Blue Petrel				2		1	3	214.5 210-219	26.0 25.5-26.5	32.2 31.0-33.5	Jan-Feb
Dove Prion	16	23	8	4	1		52	185.6 174-200	27.2/12.1 25.0-31.0	31.2 27.0-34.5	March
Broad-billed Prion		2					2	205.5 202-209	35.0/20.7 34.5-35.5	34.7 34.0-35.5	
Thin-billed Prion	8	4	2	2			16	186.8 181-191	26.9/10.7 24.5-29.0	33.1 31.5-34.4	
Fairy Prion		2		1			3	176.3 173-180	22.5/10.7 22.0-23.0	30.7 30.5-31.0	Feb-Mar
White-chinned Petrel				5	6	3	14	384.2 366-401	51.9 50-54	63.4 60-67	April
Wilson's Storm-petrel			1	1			2	146.5 144-149	12.5 12.0-13.0	36.2 35.5-37.0	Apr-May?
Black-bellied Storm-petrel	3	5	37	17			62	161.8 152-169	14.9 14.0-16.0	40.9 38.5-44.0	Apr-May?
Total	24	34	16	52	24	4	154				

KEY

Average measurements and range in mm, including length/breadth of the bill of the prions (cf *Sea Swallow* 31:41); fledging dates from I. Hunter, J. P. Croxall and P. A. Prince (*Brit. Ant. Surv. Bull.* 56:63); S - Stromness, H - Husvik, G - Grytviken.

Useful lists of the local birds have been published by Prince *et al.* (*Br. Antarct. Surv. Bull.* 48:103-118, 59:15-27), to which it is now necessary to add the southern race of the Royal Albatross *Diomedea e. epomophora*, seen by WFC at 52°57'S 42°11'W, 50nm north-west of the Shag Rocks, on 17 March 1986, a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* which he saw come on board at approximately 52°33'S 46°W, 120nm west of Shag Rocks on 29 April 1986, and fly ashore at South Georgia next day; also the Grey, Atlantic and White-headed Petrels *Procellaria cinerea*, *Pterodroma incerta*, and *P. lessonii*, Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* and Dolphin Gull *Larus scoresbii*, reported in *Sea Swallow* 34:18-28 last year. WFC saw Grey Petrels again off the Shag Rocks and between Leith and Grytviken on 18 and 19 February 1986, and one Dolphin Gull at Grytviken on 21 February with three there on 12 March. He was also able to measure two Broad-billed Prions *Pachyptila vittata*, for which there was previously only one sight record, when they came on board at Stromness on 14 March (Table 1). WRPB saw a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* at Grytviken on 15 April 1985, and WFC four at the Hamburg Lakes on 12 March 1986, with at least two White-rumped Sandpipers *Calidris fuscicollis* on the Tonberg Peninsula on 14-15 March.

Occasional birds were recorded at ships' lights throughout the year, and WFC found that the number was particularly large in the southern autumn of 1986 (Table 1). The largest totals probably involve fledging chicks, as with the rather small Dove Prions *Pachyptila desolata* in March and extraordinary number of Black-bellied Storm-petrels *Fregetta tropica* at Husvik in May. While it seems possible from the number of Slender-billed Prions *Pachyptila belcheri* that they may also breed in the area, the presence of the subtropical Broad-billed Prions *Pachyptila vittata* with them also suggests that alternatively there may also have been an influx of northern species to South Georgia similar to that in the Falklands in this year.

MORE SOUTHERLY ISLANDS

The seabirds occurring to the south are described by G. E. Watson in his *Birds of the Antarctic and Sub-antarctic* (American Geophysical Union, 1975). Pioneer accounts of the birds of the bare, icy South Sandwich Islands 330nm east of South Georgia and the surrounding seas have been published in *Sea Swallow* by J. Wilkinson, G. Edwards and M. K. Barritt in the past (9:18-20, 10:22, 20:30-34, 33:58-60). Although they are only known to be inhabited by Antarctic breeding species, the area is also frequented in summer by subantarctic birds such as the Soft-plumaged, Kerguelen and Blue Petrels *Pterodroma mollis*, *P. brevirostris* and *Halobaena caerulea*. A trip was made to demolish an Argentinian base in 1982, to the temporary discomposure of the innumerable penguins, although unfortunately nobody appears to have made any bird notes. Accounts of trips further south have also been published by P. W. Buchanan and G. Lathbury, and a considerable series of records obtained by R.R.S. *Shackleton* and H.M.S. *Endurance* in 1973-74 have been plotted by Captain Tuck (*Sea Swallow* 21:26-27, 22:10-15, 24:7-21). WRPB and Tony Godfrey made another trip south to rescue the deputy leader of the Joint Services Expedition to Brabant Island 1983-1985, Lt. Cdr. Clive Waghorn, after he fell down a crevasse and broke his thigh in March 1985, when they saw what appear to be the first recorded Soft-plumaged Petrels and possible Common Diving-petrels *Pelecanoides urinatrix* off the South Shetlands. A book describing the expedition *Antarctic Year: Brabant Island Expedition* by the leader Cdr. Chris Furse (who has already provided an account of a previous expedition to Elephant Island) is due to be published by Croom Helm shortly.

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SEABIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM METEOROLOGICAL REPORTS

By Captain A. S. Young, M.N.

Again in 1985 through the continued good offices of the marine superintendent Captain G. V. Mackie, Captain Mike Coombs and Captain John Houghton of the Met. Office, Marine Division, Bracknell, we have received a consistently good number of seabird reports from the ships of the Voluntary Met. Observing Fleet, with which I have endeavoured to deal (at times with some little difficulty!) in an informative manner. My thanks are due to the Met. Office, and especially to the numerous ships' officers and other personnel who have spent time and effort in sending in these reports.

Space does not permit listing ships and species, as I would have liked, but this would be rather similar to previous years, with due allowance for the unfortunate and relentless depletion of our British Merchant Fleet.

I shall content myself this year with a few of the more interesting reports. There have been the usual numbers of birds being found on board, some in a bedraggled and distressed state. It is very pleasing to learn that most responded to treatment; it gives a great sense of pleasure and achievement to launch off some little feathered seafarer that has been saved from wreck!

Again there have been some excellent sketches and good photography and here's hoping our new photographic competition will this year encourage much more in this field.

Reports of particular interest were received from:

R.R.S. *John Biscoe*, Captain C. R. Elliott, whose vessel was involved in the Second International Biomass Experiment.

Two observations illustrate concentrations of seabirds associated with krill *Euphausia superba*.

On 19 Jan 1985 at 61°50'S 56°50'W, Chief Officer R. C. Plumley, in the vicinity of the South Shetland Island, reported a pronounced increase in seabird activity on the sea surface and in the air with echo sounder and sonar indicating vast amounts of krill. Over a 10' long run an estimated 4,000 Antarctic Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* and 4,200 Cape Petrel *Daption capense* were taking krill from just below the surface. The bird numbers decreased sharply when the krill layer dropped away. Also reported were 3 Black-bellied Storm-petrels *Fregetta tropica*.

On 20 Jan 1985 at 63°10'S 53°03'W, Captain Elliott and Third Officer J. M. Jenkins came upon an area with an unusually high concentration of Adelie Penguins *Pygoscelis adeliae* that appeared to be foraging. The birds were in rafts of 30-2,000 birds and whole rafts were seen to submerge as a unit within 300 metres of the ship.

The echo sounder and sonar were both disrupted by the concentrations of penguins and krill. The total numbers present were estimated at 10-15,000 birds over four miles.

M.V. *La Chacra*, Captain J. W. Murray. Date 15 March 1985. Position Lat. 31°N off Hawaiian Islands.

Having accompanied the ship for several days five albatrosses landed on deck. The reason for this was not clear for as is usually the case, once down the birds could not take off again, though making considerable effort to do so. They also appeared to be in some discomfort on the deck!

Acting on the advice of one of the ratings, who had previously experienced a similar situation, the birds were "hoisted" over the side to drop on to the sea from where, on taking off, they resumed the customary sweeping glides alongside. The birds were Laysan Albatrosses *Diomedea immutabilis*.

M.V. *Fort Resolution*, Captain P. Moore. Date 7 May 1985. Approximate position 33°N 140°W.

The vessel was joined by several Laysan Albatrosses *Diomedea immutabilis* and Black-footed Albatrosses *D. nigripes*. The former were much more venturesome, sweeping around the ship and across the decks and hatches, while the Black-footed stayed mainly in the wake.

Some of the Laysans would land on the hatch tops and had no difficulty in taking off. This "voluntary" landing of birds I find rather unusual, and also that the ship's company should have been entertained for much of the day by a "courting couple" that remained in each other's company overnight.

The ritual consisted of standing facing each other, rapidly clacking their beaks and then "fencing" with each other using their beaks. They would also bob their heads rapidly in time with each other and then one or other would break off this activity, touch themselves under a raised wing and immediately after throw the head right back, making a high pitched sound. The head bobbing would then continue. At times they would just sit or stand quietly together, occasionally touching one another with their beaks. It was at times like this that the male (presumably) would manoeuvre itself around to the back of the female; she however would move further away, but not too far! This activity continued until darkness when the two birds settled down close together on deck to sleep.

The next morning, after a bit of preening, the two flew off to join their fellows — apparently without consummating their "marriage". The other Laysans appeared to take a very consider-

Ed. This interesting observation was reported in detail in the *Marine Observer* 56:73-74. Captain Salwegter has submitted photographs taken by Second Officer B. K. Dertien of a similar activity on board M.V. *Amstelmeer* on a North Pacific crossing in 1976. It would be useful to have further notes on behaviour of albatrosses landing on board ships.

able interest in the courting couple, virtually forming a "protective air umbrella". However, the Black-foots took no interest in these delightful proceedings.

M.V. *World Jade* (Canadian Selected Ship). Captain K. McLeod.

In a comprehensive report spanning some 2½ years, Captain McLeod includes another interesting observation of albatrosses aboard in the N. Pacific.

M.V. *Act 7*. Captain W. A. Davidson (also Captains D. M. McPhail and W. J. G. Jones).

A consistently high standard of reports come in from *Act 7*, amongst which is a very interesting description of an Antarctic Skua *Catharacta antarctica* being mobbed by a large flock of prions and also one of its own kind with which it eventually flew off. This action took place on 1 Dec 1984 in position 44°30'S 53°06'E.

M.V. *Pacific Prestige*. Captain A. Jones. Date 18 June 1985. Position 27°00'S 54°32'E.

Entertained — or rather were entertained by — a Giant Petrel which entered the accommodation from the deck, was quite approachable and photogenic (though unfortunately the photographer needs a little more expertise). It was safely returned to the ocean — no doubt a little wiser for its experience.

M.V. *Remuera Bay*. Captain C. B. Walgate.

A comprehensive report covering seven days in the Southern Ocean from 7 Oct 1985, position 48°42'S 177°53'E to 16 Oct, position 47°38'S 53°39'W on an easterly course. This report was illustrated by several excellent sketches of southern species including albatross, prion, Giant Petrel and Cape Petrel including the flight pattern of some. A most painstaking and creditable exercise.

In response to a letter of request from a reader of "The Marine Observer", a young Third Officer of Island Navigation Corp (Ship Management), Hong Kong, the Met. Office have been good enough to include my article on "Treatment of Bird Casualties at Sea" Vol. 56:p.137-139. While being far from comprehensive I am hopeful that it will be something of a guide to ships' personnel who find themselves in the unfortunate and embarrassing dilemma of having to succour some little bedraggled "Fellow Seafarer".

To all our friends who contribute to our work through the good offices of the Met. Office, I send greetings and sincere thanks, and may the reports keep rolling in!

Captain A. S. Young, M.N., 'Tisbury', Lambwath Lane, New Ellerby, Hull HU11 5AP.

SEABIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHER SHIP STATION LIMA, 1984/1985

By Captain P. W. G. Chilman, M.N.

The format of this report remains as in previous years but the categories have been expanded to provide a better indication of numbers present, see Table I, and Table II.

Again the periods of observation are not continuous due to there only being one British Weather Ship *Starella*. We do have a continuous period of observation from 29 June to 22 September 1985 thanks to Mr R. C. L. Aran making the interesting voyage in the Dutch Weather Ship *Cumulus*. There are no observations for November 1984.

The daily counts in Table I (1984) include a total of 6673 Fulmars (of which 56 were blue phase), 72 Gannets (of which 42 were immature), 28 Herring Gulls (15), 92 Lesser Black-backed Gulls (32), 86 Great Black-backed Gulls (39), 4 Glaucous Gulls (0) and 3967 Kittiwakes (1111).

In Table II (1985) daily counts total 12,197 Fulmars (including 25 blue phase), 121 Gannets (75 immatures), 13 Herring Gulls (2), 280 Lesser Black-backed Gulls (108), 212 Great Black-backed Gulls (129), 12 Glaucous Gulls (6) and 8048 Kittiwakes (1456).

Species not present in the last report (1982/83) but noted here are Sandwich Tern (11) and Iceland Gull (2).

Species not sighted have been omitted from the Tables. Species seen 1982/83 but not 1984/85 are Cory's Shearwater and Puffin.

Fulmars seem to have increased considerably with several months in both 84 and 85 recording more than 50 birds per day. There also appears to have been an increase in Kittiwake numbers.

Sightings of Manx Shearwaters are usually very small but for some reason there was a big increase in October 1984. The figures for October are 1982 - Nil, 1983 - 1, 1984 - 43 including flocks of 20 and 15, 1985 - 2.

I am pleased to say that there are no reports of oiled seabirds for the period under review.

On 19 August 1984 a ringed Kittiwake was observed on board. It was ringed on both legs having a grey ring on the left leg and on the right leg either a large ring coloured red, light blue and yellow or three small rings, one of each colour. It would be appreciated if anyone recognising this ringing could advise the Editor of its origin.

On 15 August 1985 an albino Fulmar was reported; unfortunately a full description was not obtained. P. Harrison, "Seabirds", states that this is occasionally reported but it is certainly not common.

The R.N.B.W.S. is greatly indebted to all those who have contributed to the valuable observations during the period.

Note. In Table II, *Sea Swallow* 34, page 66, Kittiwake for December should be 1-49 per day.

OCEAN WEATHER SHIP OBSERVATIONS
SUMMARY OF SEABIRD SIGHTINGS, STATION LIMA (5°N 20°W)

Table 1. 1984

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
8	28	5	26	6	26	12	23	13	22	Nil	16

(153) Observation Days

Fulmar	0	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	+	0
Great Shearwater											
Sooty Shearwater											
Manx Shearwater											
Little Shearwater											
British Storm-petrel											
Gannet											
Great Skua											
Pomarine Skua											
Arctic Skua											
Long-tailed Skua											
Herring Gull											
Lesser Black-backed Gull											
Great Black-backed Gull											
Glaucous Gull											
Iceland Gull											
Kittiwake	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	0	0		0
Black-headed Gull											
Sandwich Tern											
Arctic Tern											
Common Tern											
Little Auk											
Guillemot											

Table 2. 1985

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
20	10	23	6	30	3	31	11	22	12	16	20

(224) Observation Days

Fulmar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Great Shearwater											
Sooty Shearwater											
Manx Shearwater											
Little Shearwater											
British Storm-petrel											
Gannet											
Great Skua											
Pomarine Skua											
Arctic Skua											
Long-tailed Skua											
Herring Gull											
Lesser Black-backed Gull											
Great Black-backed Gull											
Glaucous Gull											
Iceland Gull											
Kittiwake	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black-headed Gull											
Sandwich Tern											
Arctic Tern											
Common Tern											
Little Auk											
Guillemot											

Key — Occasional sightings
+ Average 1 - 9 per day
0 Average 10 - 49 per day
x Average 50 or more per day

LANDBIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA, 1984/85

by Commander M. B. Casement, O.B.E., R.N.

Records from or near Sation Lima (57°N 20°W) — 210nm WSW Rockall, 450nm S. Iceland) — were received from R. C. L. Aran, D. E. C. Hampton and G. Sans. and cover the following periods:

1984 8-30 Apr, 2-6 June, Aug. and 1-21 Oct.

1985 7 Apr, 3-31 May, 29 Jun - 22 Sept. and 19 Oct - 16 Nov.

1984

Blackbird *Turdus merula*. One M was on board 57°10'N 20°07'W (385nm WNW Eagle Island, N. Ireland) from 8 Apr until 091800Z.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, 23 Apr (2), one died (BEH), and 30 April (1) when 100nm west N. Ireland, 3 June (1).

House Martin *Delichon urbica*, 5 June (1), weak, found dead 6 June (BEH), 21 Oct (1).

Golden Plover *Charadrius apricarius*, 6 June (1) northern race, breeding plumage, remained several hours (wind N/8 kts.).

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*, 11 Oct (1).

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, 17 Oct (1).

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, one prob. (M) on board 6 June.

Phylloscopus warbler, two prob. Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* on 2 June.

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, 1 Oct (1), 2 Oct (6).

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, 21 and 22 Aug (1).

1985

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, 11 Sep (1).

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus*. One thought to be this species was caught on 3 Aug and caged, fed on raw meat and bacon rind.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*. One female took up residence in the balloon shed on 25-27 Aug. It was offered various meat but this remained untouched. The falcon departed in a southerly gale force 7 on 27 Aug.

Eider *Somateria*. One appeared swimming and diving alongside the ship on 11 Nov and remained 3 days. It was not seen to fly.

Pipit, thought to be a Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, flew into balloon shed on 7 Apr.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*, 7 Sep (1), 8 Sep (2), 16 Sep (1)

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. One aboard pm 3 May

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*, 3 May (1 prob), 8 Sep (1), 1 Nov (2), 2 Nov (1).

Wheatear, 25 May (1), 29 Aug (1), 3 Sep (1), 16 Sep (1), 1 Oct (1), 2 Oct (6).

Swift *Apus apus*. One seen in flight on 31 May.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, 28 Aug (2), 3 Sep (1), 22 Sep (1).

Purple Sandpiper. One (exhausted) on 5 Nov.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*. One caught and caged on 28 Jul — stayed until 30th.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*, 19 May (1), 23 May (1).

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, 17 Aug (group of 5 flew past), 19 Aug (1).

Dotterel *Eudromias morinellus*, 15 Aug (1).

Oystercatcher, 28 Aug (1), Sep (1).

WATCHING ATLANTIC SEABIRDS FROM ST. IVES, CORNWALL

By Bernard King

BACKGROUND

In the autumn of 1953 Roy Phillips, with other West Country ornithologists, realised that the elevated promontory, the Island, St. Ives, Cornwall was an excellent place from which to observe not only offshore movements of Atlantic seabirds, but also those in the nearby St. Ives Bay (see *Cornwall Bird Report* 1958: 40-41); previously, little attention had been paid to, or known of, the locality ornithologically. He informed me that Leach's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* had been seen, so I visited the promontory that morning and came across 12, during very squally NW winds, feeding by the rocks and sewage outfall on edible items from the sea surface. They did not disperse until the tide receded an hour later.

From such simple beginnings serious efforts were then made in the following years to determine from St. Ives and other coastal regions in the district, the species and seasonal numbers of birds likely to be found, particularly in the late summer/autumn, and those which the severe winter gales might bring. The *Handbook of British Birds* (1940-41) described some seabirds as Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus p. mauretanicus* as "vagrant", Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* a "scarce autumn and winter visitor", the Mediterranean Gull *L. melanocephalus* "ten or more"; observations from the Island, however, proved this not to be so, though identification at times of some of these species was difficult, especially of Balearic Shearwaters and sub-adult Mediterranean Gulls.

On retirement to west Cornwall in 1971 I paid particular attention to the winter seabirds, with one memorable episode at St. Ives Bay on 11 January 1976. My wife and I visited the Porth Kidney side of the Bay during gale-force westerlies (force 7-9, gusting to 10 or more) and accompanying heavy rain. From this extreme spot overlooking the whole area we estimated 25,000 Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* — indeed an amazing gathering. Later we found this was confirmed by Roy Phillips who was also in the locality (*Cornwall Bird Report* 1976: 44). Not only were there huge white "rafts" of resting Kittiwakes with others fluttering overhead, but the whole Bay was seething with hundreds at various altitudes. In addition, unestimated numbers (many hundreds) were flying to and fro offshore. Next day the gales had more or less subsided and relatively few Kittiwakes were present.

The area has subsequently become well known throughout the British Isles and elsewhere, especially during the late summer and autumn, for the significant southerly migration of seabirds passing St. Ives and nearby coastal areas, with others seeking temporary shelter in St. Ives Bay. The "right" Atlantic weather to cause these

great movements of seabirds close to the Cornish coast is a major factor: for example, deep depressions originating from Greenland, Iceland and northern Canada, also the autumn hurricanes along the eastern seaboard of North America moving into the mid-Atlantic bring very strong westerly gales. Breeding seabirds dispersing to their winter quarters during such conditions are thus caught up by these gales. If veering NW these bring many birds directly towards the Cornish coasts, and especially to St. Ives Bay. These include: Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*, Pomarine Skua *S. pomarinus*, Long-tailed Skua *S. longicaudus*, Sabine's Gull, Kittiwake and Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisea*.

These gales of course also involve the British/European and Scandinavian seabirds forming part of the southerly migration, sometimes in considerable numbers eg: Gavia sp., Gannet *Sula bassana*, Fulmar *Fulmaris glacialis*, Manx Shearwater *P. p. puffinus*, Balearic Shearwater — the western Mediterranean race of Manx Shearwater, Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, Leach's Storm-petrel, Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*, Cormorant *P. carbo*, Great Skua, Arctic Skua, Mediterranean Gull, Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*, Kittiwake, Arctic Tern, Common Tern *S. hirundo*, Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis*, Guillemot *Uria aalge* and Razorbill *Alca torda*. In addition to all these, the true oceanic wanderers such as Great Shearwaters *P. gravis* and Sooty Shearwaters *P. griseus* may also be present. Many of these may also come very close to St. Ives and thus form part of the conglomeration of autumn seabirds.

AUTUMN 1983

It is against this background that the enormous influx of seabirds which occurred on 3 September 1983, mentioned briefly in *British Birds* 76: 594-5, must be seen in context. South-westerly gales were experienced exceptionally early — during late August and early September — instead of well into September and October, thus catching North Atlantic breeding seabirds before these were able to get far on their way towards their southern winter quarters. On 3 September the SW gales veered NW bringing seabirds towards the north Cornish coast and close to St. Ives, the Island and the Bay. In consequence, an unprecedented influx not only passed close to the Island but masses also into St. Ives Bay — an experience never to be forgotten. The following list gives an idea of some of the species and numbers encountered.

Gannet. 20,000 estimated, comprising those well out to sea and offshore, with very many in the Bay mostly adults or sub-adults.

Great Shearwater. 80 off St. Ives — quite an exceptional influx even for this area.

Sooty Shearwater. 250 observed.

Manx Shearwater. *Cornwall Bird Report* 1983 : 7 stated 20-50,000 seen on this memorable occasion — easily the greatest

number of Manx I have observed on one day. Those flying at sea and just inshore flew in great low streams, and many others rested on the surface in small parties apparently taking food on or just below the surface. Others plunged from a height, momentarily disappearing, and obviously obtaining food. There were many more in the Bay behaving similarly and a few were found on nearby beaches. Some were returned to the sea.

Balearic Shearwater. Two or three were identified among the Manx, but there were probably more.

Storm-petrel. An unforgettable spectacle! 10,000, mostly in the Bay, in huge "rafts" on the water, feeding on the surface, and others fluttering just above (see Plate 1). Others flying at various heights moved in flocks passing near the rocks and parapets.

Leach's Storm-petrel. 15 in total counted during the day, all a little offshore.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. One only was seen toward the latter part of the day.

Great Skua. A few only were seen in the Bay, with more moving offshore and others well out to sea, in total 450.

Pomarine Skua. 20 were seen during the day, mostly dark phase, including juveniles.

Arctic Skua *S. parasiticus*. At least 450 — some within the Bay, but mostly offshore.

Long-tailed Skua. Four juveniles.



Plate 1. Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, St. Ives Bay 1983
Photo: W. R. Hirst



Plate 2. Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, St. Ives Bay 1983

Photo: W. R. Hirst

Sabine's Gull At least 100 seen, many of which remained in the Bay for long periods. This was by far the largest number seen in Britain during a day's seawatch. Whereas the majority seen in this country are juveniles, on this occasion all except two or three were in full summer plumage (see Plate 2). It seems there is little doubt the early gales had caught many leaving their breeding grounds before they were well on their way south to winter in the South Atlantic. Furthermore, many in the Bay found it beneficial to feed in company with the hordes of storm-petrels. Gales had so disturbed the sea in the Bay, apparently causing quantities of edible matter to come just below the surface. Storm-petrels were everywhere in the area, flying and hovering, with many forming large floating "rafts", and others feeding individually; all avidly picked and fed on the material with rapid head and bill movements. The Sabine's Gulls were thus attracted into the Bay because of the availability of food. They joined in with the petrels on the water and others in low flight. It was fascinating to stand by the harbour wall to see all these birds, sometimes from only a few metres distance.

Kittiwake. My estimate was at least 2,000 but there may have been more. It was impossible to deal accurately with all the birds.

Roseate Tern *S. dougallii*. Two were noted close to the shore.

Arctic Tern. Some 100 were identified — there may have been very many more.

Sandwich Tern. 45 were counted, of which a number were juveniles.

SUMMARY.

I have endeavoured to place on record a little of the history of how St. Ives has evolved as a major place to observe Atlantic seabirds. There is a great opportunity here for serious study of seabird movements by those with the time and will to do so.

Bernard King, "Gull Cry", 9 Park Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall.

LANDBIRDS FROM SHIPS AT SEA

Analysis by Commander M. B. Casement, O.B.E.,

Royal Navy

The following landbird report sheets were received during the last year. Extracts are shown in the appropriate geographical sections using the observer's initials.

- Captain R. L. Westwater, M.N. - M.V. *FLEET WAVE* - Med, Atlantic, Caribbean, 2 pages plus excellent series of photos.
- Third Officer A. R. Louch, M.N. - R.R.S. *DISCOVERY* - N.E. Atlantic and R.R.S. *CHARLES DARWIN* - N.E. Atlantic, S.W. Approaches.
- Captain N. G. Cheshire, M.N. - Australian Research Vessel *FRANKLIN* - Pacific, Coral Sea.
- Captain K. Salwegter, Neth. M.N. - M.V. *AMSTELVAART* - W. Atlantic, E. Atlantic and M.V. *AMSTELVOORN* - Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean, E. Atlantic.
- Captain P. D. Williams - M.T. *SCOTTISH EAGLE* - Falklands.
- Electrical Officer C. R. Jane - M.V. *BRITISH ESK* - Ascension Island.
- Chief Officer P. C. Dyer - M.V. *LUNDY SERVICE* - S. China Sea.
- Mr R. J. Tucker - S.S. *ACT 5* - Caribbean.
- L R. O. (G) N. W. Cottle - H.M.S. *BEAVER* - E. Atlantic, English Channel, North Sea, Baltic - 8 pages.
- Chief Officer M. G. Weir and Chief Petty Officer J. Manley - M.V. *MISSISSIPPI* - Med., Red Sea.
- Captain J. Welch, M.N. - S.S. *MAIN EXPRESS* - North Pacific.
- Captain P. W. G. Chilman, M.N. - M.V. *TECTUS* - E. Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Pacific (1983).
- Radio Officer W. Weitkowitz - M.V. *ANNA WESCH* - Gib. Straits and M.V. *FLORENZ* - off Dakar (Senegal), Mediterranean and Adriatic.
- Lieut. A. K. Ross, R.N. - H.M.S. *HERMIONE* - Falklands and South Georgia.
- Captain D. M. Simpson, M.N. submitted detailed notes from M.V. *BIG-ORANGE XII* operating in the Gulf of Suez, Jan - Apr 1985 and from M.V. *PACIFIC BEAR* in Zuluf and Marjan oilfields, Persian Gulf, July - Nov 1985.
- C.P.O. Yeoman B. Bewsher sent two pages of notes, and excellent photographs taken aboard R.F.A. *REGENT* deployed to Indian Ocean and South Atlantic in 1985.
- Bird Examined in the Hand (BEH) forms were received from PCD (Swallow *Hirundo rustica*) and DMS (White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*).

Once again I have been kept busy with a spate of interesting extracts from ship's Meteorological Logs thanks to the sterling efforts of Captain M. L. M. Coombs of the Meteorological Office, Bracknell, and Captain Tony Young who handles the seabird records from this source.

The analysis is presented in the same geographical sections A to J as in previous years. Extracts from Met. Logs are indicated by the notation (Met).

SECTION A — EAST ATLANTIC (EAST OF 30°W) INCLUDING BAY OF BISCAY AND IBERIANT

1985

On 18 Mar RLW saw at least 15 "eagles", probably *Buteo* sp., crossing the Straits of Gibraltar; winds were NW/6-7.

WW noted an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, several Black Kites *Milvus migrans* and Pied Crows *Corvus albus* in Dakar outer harbour (Senegal) on 18 Feb.

Two Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* were recorded by RLW on 24 Apr 43nm south of Bishop Rock, and a Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* landed aboard in position 46°40'N 15°55'W — 460nm WSW Ushant.

Two Swallows *Hirundo rustica* were aboard M.V. *SCOTTISH STAR* (Met) on 18 May when 400nm west of Portugal (42°50'N 18°47'W).



Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, mid-Atlantic 20 May 1985.

Sketched by 3rd Officer M. A. Pearce, M.T. *OVERSEAS ARGONAUT*

On the evening of 20 May a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* (see sketch) joined M.T. *OVERSEAS ARGONAUT* (Met) somewhere off the Western Isles of Scotland, and disappeared on 27th when off the Newfoundland Banks. It was seen at frequent intervals looking quite healthy and from the number of carcasses of small birds found, it had no difficulty in finding food. (NOTE. This is the first instance of which I am aware of an east-west crossing of the Atlantic. Ed.).

ARL recorded a possible Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* on 28 July in the Bristol Channel, 50°33'N 06°54'W - 40nm NW Scillies. It remained for 2 hours.

On 14 Aug an unidentified swift *Apus* sp. was sighted by ARL 220nm west of Cape St. Vincent, and on 27 Aug a probable Whimbrel when 50nm SW Madeira (32°30'N 17°39'W) was seen flying east.

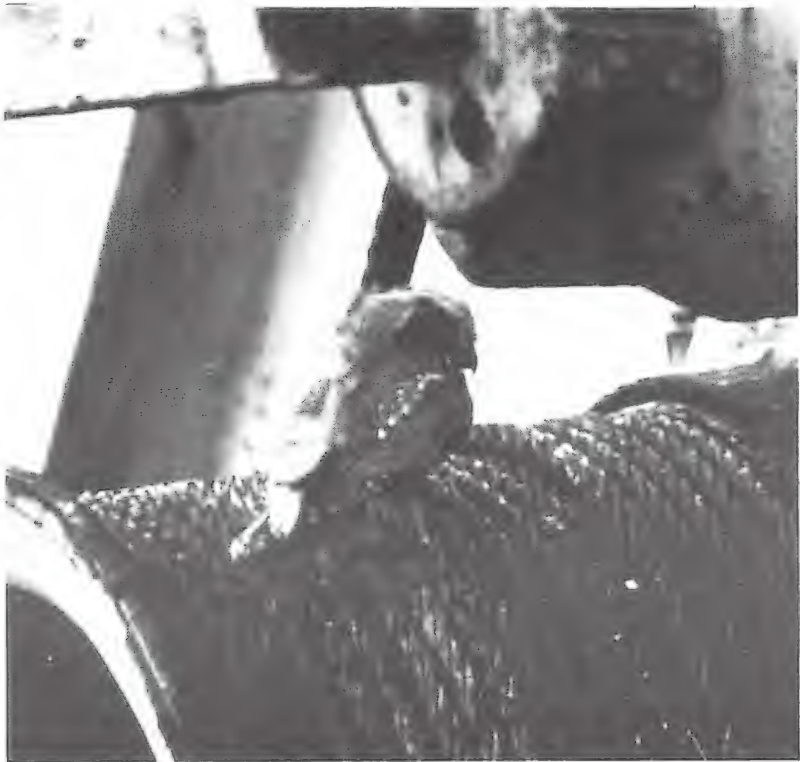
BB recorded a Rufous Bushchat *Cercotrichas galactotes* on board 2 hours on 21 Aug in position 20°25'N 18°13'W - 70nm west of Cape Blanco, Senegal and a Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* which stunned itself on hitting the bridge window.

M.V. *FARLAND* (Met) recorded a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* aboard on 26 Aug in position 12°12'N 27°11'W - 200 nm SW C. Verde Is.

On 6 Sept M.V. *WHEELSMAN* (Met) reported a Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* in position 52°31'N 05°13'W - 22nm off coast of Wales. The wind was WNW/4-5.

Mr Piet Meeth took an excellent photograph of a juvenile Scops Owl *Scops otus* on 7 Sept first seen at 0745 sitting on the boat deck - ship's noon position was 17°05'N 23°18'W. 28nm NW Isla do Sal, Cape Verde Is. Also noted were 2 Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur*, a Moustached Warbler *Luscinola melanopogon*, 2 Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca*, a Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, a Reed/Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus* sp, and a Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis*.

M.V. *ACT 7* (Met) recorded interesting species in mid-Atlantic 16-17 Oct in position 3°48'N 27°53'W - 200nm NE St. Paul's Rocks. 840nm SW C. Verde, West Africa. These included a curlew, probably a Whimbrel, circling the ship, and a probable Grey Heron aboard. On 17th a falcon, probably a Kestrel *F. tinnunculus* or perhaps Merlin *F. columbarius* was sighted in position 12°12'N 26°24'W, 200nm SW C. Verde Is.



Juvenile Scops Owl *Scops otus*
Photo: P. Meeth

MV LLOYD TEXAS (Met) recorded a Grey Heron aboard on 18 Sept in position 12°51'N 26°40'W (160nm NW C. Verde Is.) which remained until next day when 80nm from the islands.

On 20 Sept KS was heading north close off the coast of West Africa and recorded 2 Swallows, a Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, 2 Turtle Doves, *Streptopelia turtur* and a Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* in position 11°30'N 17°29'W - 60 nm SW Bijouga Is. These remained until 21st and numbers increased to 5 Turtle Doves and 6 Swallows. A Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* came aboard at 1730 when 70nm west of Senegal and remained until 0830 on 22nd when it flew away. Most of the Swallows died, there being no insects to be found on board.

On 2 Oct RRS CHARLES DARWIN (Met) recorded a Grey Heron in position 9°15'N 21°19'W - 330nm west Bijouga Is. (Guinea).

On 7 Oct NWC recorded a Merlin (F/Juv) which attempted to land on the superstructure in strong winds (W'ly 28 kts) in position 47°52'N 13°47'W - 300nm NW Cape Finisterre. It attempted to catch a Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* but without success. Next day the caterer fed it some fresh raw beef on the flight deck. It was seen flying between the ship and R.F.A. GREEN ROVER during a replenishment at sea (RAS) that afternoon, and at about 1630 it took refuge from the strong wind beneath a foc'sle winch on the R.F.A. before flying off in a northerly direction to disappear out of sight.

On 10 Oct a Corncrake *Crex crex* landed on a liferaft stowage on H.M.S. BEAVER in position 46°03'N 13°48'W (250nm NW Cape Finisterre. It remained for about 5 mins before flying off: the wind was SSW 14 kts.

On 14 Oct a Kestrel (Juv. M) took up position in the port navigation light (position 46°02'N 15°39'W - 320nm NW Cape Finisterre). NWC placed some chicken wings inside for it, much to the displeasure of the Navigator! The following morning the food was untouched and there was no sign of the falcon. Also on board on 14th was a Merlin which had already killed once as shown by the mess of yellow and black feathers found on the boat deck (these were subsequently sent to the B.T.O. and identified as the remains of a Siskin *Carduelis spinus*). The bird was seen to kill a small unidentifiable passerine some distance from the ship. Other species noted were a Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, a rather bedraggled Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* (Juv), a Warbler *Phylloscopus* sp., and a possible Dunnock *Prunella modularis* seen hopping about the foc'sle. The wind throughout this period was SE at 10 kts.

On 15th the Robin was still around but looking none too healthy: it was given moistened bread but was not observed to take any. A Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* (F/juv) was also flying around the ship (position 280nm WNW Cape Finisterre). Both were still around and in better physical condition on 16th when 250nm NW Lisbon. On 16th a Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (M), a Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and a Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* were also noted aboard when 38°03'N 12°37'W - 150nm WSW Lisbon.

On 18th the ship was 150nm SW Cape St. Vincent and the Chaffinch was still on board. Also seen were Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, a pipit *Anthus* sp., White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, and a "willow-chaff" *Phylloscopus* sp., all of which were seen briefly heading S-SE towards North Africa: the wind was NW'ly 5 kts. A Siskin was also seen flying about the ship.

1986

On 25 Feb KS saw a Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* in position 45°49'N 07°23'W, 220nm Cape Finisterre, battling against strong Force 6 winds and sometimes flying amongst Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*.

WW noted several Swallows crossing the Straits of Gibraltar during strong north-westerly winds on 18 March.



Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Atlantic 1985

Photo: Capt. R. L. Westwater, M.N.

SECTION B — ENGLISH CHANNEL, NORTH SEA AND BALTIC

1985

On 18 May MV *DRUP 2* (Met) recorded the following species whilst loading on the *BRENT SPAR* in position 61°03'N 01°04'E - 60nm NE Shetlands:
 Bluethroat *Cyanosylvia svecica* "at least 6 positively identified" (no details given - Ed.).

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* — at least 6.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* — (1).

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* — (1).

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* — (1).

and an unidentified hawk or falcon.

On 27 May a probable Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* (Immature F) was reported by E.S.V. *IOLAIR* (Met) circling an oil platform in position 57°44'N 0°59'E - 65nm east Kinnaird's head.

In the English Channel, NWC recorded a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* and a probable Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* on 24 Sept when 35nm south of Devon coast.

S.S. *MAERSK BUCHAN* (Met) recorded an interesting variety of birds during the period 21 Oct - 1 Nov while operating in an area 57°57'N 00°03'E - 60nm ENE Peterhead.

Female "Sparrowhawk" (it could have been a Merlin *Falco columbarius*). — seen almost daily.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* — (2).

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* — (3).

The owls were seen daily, and sometimes at night, flying in and out of foc'sle head where remains of small birds were found.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*. Large numbers seen on one day.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* and Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. Numerous on most days — the staple diet of the "hawk".

Carrión Crow *Corvus corone*. Max. 6 (plus 2 Hooded Crows).

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* 1-2 on 2-3 days.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*. One seen trying to fly west into a gale force wind, but frequently returned to rest on board.

E.S.V. *IOLAIR* (Met) reported a "Tawny Owl" (but more likely to have been a Short-eared Owl) observed on 21 Oct. and several nights thereafter flying between the ship and *FORTIES CHARLIE* oil platform in position 57°50'N 01°E (95nm east of Peterhead). At around 2300 on 22nd a vast number of Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* and other unidentified small birds were observed circling the ship and platform.

On 31 Oct NWC saw a Dunlin *Calidris alpina* twice make as if to land on the water close to the ship when 25nm south of Devon coast, and a Woodcock circled the ship before heading off SE. A Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* was seen briefly on board, together with a group of at least 12 Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, 3 Starlings and Chaffinch (F). The weather was 8/8 low cloud with continuous rain and poor visibility — ideal weather for grounding migrants.

In position 53°11'N 02°33'E (50nm NE coast of Norfolk) on 1 Nov NWC counted 54 Starlings in groups of 4, 20, and 30 heading SW. The wind was NW 12 kts.

In the Baltic on 1 Dec, NWC identified 5 Black-throated Divers *Gavia arctica* in flight — 54°44'N 12°30'E, 12nm SW Falster, Denmark, and 9 probable Mute Swans *Cygnus olor*.

1986

On 17 Mar M.V. *BALTIC EAGLE* (Met) was anchored off Felixstowe and was inundated with a vast roost of Starlings, estimated in thousands, which started to arrive soon after midnight and left shortly before sunrise. There was patchy fog at the time with visibility 1/2-2nm.

SECTION C — WEST ATLANTIC (West of 30°W)

1985

On 21 Mar RLW photographed a Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* in winter plumage aboard in position 31°52'N 35°12'W — 497nm WSW Flores, Azores. It remained 2½ hours and departed west.

A Yellow-throated Warbler *Dendroica dominica* was photographed by RLW on 2 Apr having been driven aboard during a rain squall off the coast of Florida.

M.V. *FORT TORONTO* (Met) reported a White Ibis *Eudocimus albus* sheltering aboard at daybreak in position 26°14'N 74°25'W — 120nm NE Eleuthera, Bahamas.

On 5 Jul M.V. *RAVENS CRAIG* (Met) recorded a Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* which came aboard in Cabot Strait and remained until 6th when 180nm SE Sable Island — 300nm SE Nova Scotia.

On 30 Aug M.V. *ROACH BANK* (Met) recorded a Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus novaboracensis* and a small warbler, possibly a Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*, in position 30°50'N 54°12'W — 600nm SSE Bermuda. Both subsequently died.

M.V. *CASPIAN UNIVERSAL* (Met) recorded a probable Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon* on 11 Sept in position 21°53'N 62°10'W — 220nm north of Virgin Is.

On 24 Sept a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* came aboard M.V. *LINCOLN-SHIRE* (Met) in the entrance to the Delaware River and remained until last seen late pm 28th when 300nm SE Newfoundland. It preyed on a number of unidentified small passerine birds also taking passage which numbered 15-20 initially but were gradually decimated. On 27th it was seen unsuccessfully attempting to catch various seabirds including a Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*.

On 22 Oct M.V. *HAROLD LA BORDA* (Met) recorded a probable Great Blue Heron in position 30°20'N 75°28'W — 270nm SE S. Carolina — 235nm north of Bermuda. Winds were SE/3.

An Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* joined M.V. *PORT VANCOUVER* (Met) in position 36°50'N 41°07'W, 1000nm SE Newfoundland, 500nm WSW Azores, in November (date not recorded).



Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Atlantic

Photo: Capt. R. L. Westwater, M.N.

1986

KS recorded a Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* and an Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* (M in moulting plumage) on 1 May in position 39°25'N 73°44'W — 20nm SE New Jersey.

On 8 May KS identified a Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca* on board all day searching for food in position 39°30'N 71°49'W, 120nm SE Long Island.

SECTION D — GULF OF MEXICO and CARIBBEAN

1985

On 30 Apr RJR recorded a probable Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* in position 15°54'N 81°00'W (120nm east C. Gracias al Dios, Honduras) which rested aboard 24 hours. Small flocks of 6-8 were also seen next day flying low over the water. Numerous swallows *Hirundo* sp. and green coloured "finches" circled the ship on 1 May when 100nm south of Cuba.

On 3 May RLW photographed a Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca* (F) which flew into the wheelhouse 30nm NE Almirante Bocas del Toro, Panama. He kept it in his cabin until arrival at Almirante.

RJT saw a large "hawk" around the ship all day on 19 May hunting small passerine migrants; description and behaviour suggested Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* but thought to be too large.

On 15 Jun M.V. *SCOTTISH LION* (Met) reported a prob. Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica* aboard in position 24°10'N 84°15'W — 90nm NW Cuba.



Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca* (F)

Photo: Capt. R. L. Westwater, M.N.

1986

KS recorded a Peregrine Falcon (M) on 12 May when 50nm SE Jamaica. It was still there in the foremast next day having been carried 260nm south-west. Two Cattle Egret and a Mourning Dove *Zenaidura macroura* were also noted 230nm S. Jamaica.

SECTION E — MEDITERRANEAN

1985

M.V. *AURORA* (Met) reported numerous birds aboard on 26 Mar in the central Ionian Sea including swallows *Hirundo* sp., "finches", wagtails *Motacilla* sp. and "a plover similar in size and colour as a curlew but with a short beak." Also observed at dawn were "two medium sized speckled tawny owls". A Kestrel *Falco* sp. was observed to catch a "sparrow". The ship's position was 200nm north of Libya and 160nm SE C. Passero (Sicily).

A Barn Owl *Tyto alba* flew into the accommodation of M.V. *VOSGES* (Met) when 25nm SW Corsica on 27 Mar. and remained aboard until arrival Marseilles.

On 2 May WW reported 3 warblers thought to be Melodious *Hippolais polyglotta* or possibly Icterine *H. icterina* off the Algerian coast (noon position 37°10'N 04°37'E). Also seen were Yellow Wagtail *Sylvia curruca* and Garden Warbler *S. borin*. On 4 May, in the SW Ionian Sea, he recorded a single Swift *Apus apus* and a Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*. Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, several *flava* wagtails, Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, 2 Wood Warblers *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, and a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striatus*. Noon position was 37°16'N 16°54'E.

Two Quail *Coturnix coturnix* were seen on 5th whilst in the Adriatic, also a Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*, a Spotted Flycatcher, a Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* and 2 Stonechat *Saxicola rubetra*. A male Red-footed Falcon *Falco tinnunculus* was seen on 6th in the Northern Adriatic (noon position 44°38'N 13°17'E), also several *flava* wagtails, a Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, several Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, an Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*, several White-throats *Sylvia communis*, a Spotted Flycatcher and two adult male Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus*. Winds during this period were moderate north-easterly.

MGW and JM recorded an Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* on 31 Aug in the Ionian Sea 90nm east of Cape Passero. It remained on the deck cargo for 5 hours and showed distinct animosity to an Olivaceous Warbler which attempted to land close by. Next day a Whitethroat (Adult F) flew around the ship for 10 hours whilst at anchor off Piraeus. On 3 Sept a Red-footed Falcon was noted when 15nm east of Tylos, which dived unsuccessfully at a small warbler from its roost on the foremast.

On 6 Sept MGW and JM reported that an Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* was flushed from the hawse-pipe whilst weighing anchor off Port Said.

Between 2230-2330 on 19 Sept M.V. CITY OF EDINBURGH (Met) passed through a spectacular electrical storm 10nm north of Cape Bon when a "flock of small light green sparrow-type birds" landed on board and "proceeded to carry out a series of suicide attacks" against the ship's mainmast. Next morning a daylight examination revealed "a death toll of 27 and one injured (which subsequently died)".

SECTION F — RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN

1985

DMS recorded an interesting selection of species whilst operating in the Gulf of Suez from 1 Jan to 19 April. Uncertain identifications are indicated (U):

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* — probably resident.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* — one in breeding plumage circled on 5 Apr.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* — a flock of 600 flying just above wave height in a NE direction on 8 Mar (position 28°14'N 33°16'E); this was a fantastic sight with the flock stretching at least ½ mile long. On 20 Apr, whilst flying from Ras Shukheir to Cairo the aircraft flew over a very large V-formation heading north at a considerable altitude.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* — 3 appeared briefly on 15 Mar heading west towards land.

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* — on 15 Mar a flock of 9 appeared from the south and settled on the water in Ras Sukheir for 2 hours before departing.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* (U) — 3 on 15th and 2 on 16th Mar circling and soaring moving northwards.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* — 2 on 12 Apr moving northwards amongst a flock of Black Kites (see below).

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* — the most numerous raptor observed — seen on 13 Mar (3), 15th (3), 18th (2), 20th (3), 21st (7), and 24 Apr (38).

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* — singles on 9th, 14th and 20th Apr.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* — one seen off Tuwail Island in Jan, presumably resident.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* (U) — one at dusk on 17 Apr.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* — one on 16 Mar flying low NW.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops epops* — singles on 15th, 22nd and 26th Mar, sp. flew overhead on 18 Mar, might have been Lesser Short-toed *C. rufescens*.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica* — first recorded on 15 Mar and seen regularly thereafter, usually in small groups of 6-8.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* — a flock of 12 flew low across Ras Shukeir Bay heading NW on 7 Apr.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* — a number were wintering in the Ras Shukheir area throughout Jan-Mar. On fine days a flock of about 12 regularly flew out from land to spend the day about the derelict drilling rig in the bay.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* — a male in breeding plumage came aboard ship in JULY oilfield on 8 Mar.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* — one throughout 16 Mar and two on 17th, actively catching flies with loud snappings of bill.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* — one F on 19 Apr.

In addition to the above, there was a general northward movement of numerous unidentified passerines often in flocks, throughout the latter half of Mar and Apr. These included wheatears *Oenanthe* sp., pipits *Anthus* sp., and warblers.

M.V. *ENCOUNTER BAY* (Met) recorded a spectacular migration of Storks crossing the Gulf of Suez on 21 Mar. Estimated at "more than a thousand", they left the Egyptian coast, in a stream hundreds of yards long, in an easterly direction towards Sinai. The ship's position was 28°00'N 33°34'E.

On 24 July BB photographed a Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* which landed on board in position 19°53'N 39°E — 100nm south of Jeddah, 100nm east of Port Sudan. The wind was WNW/4 with clear skies and good visibility. On 25th, when abeam Jabel Attair Island, a falcon, possibly a female Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* was photographed resting on the mast.

MWG and JM recorded the following in the central Red Sea on 9 Sept:

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* — one alighted on deck and remained 36 hours.

Three more joined pm and remained until 12th on arrival Salalah (Oman).

Swallow (one adult and one juv) circling ship.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* — aboard for 1 hour.

Hoopoe — seen to drink from a puddle in scupper.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* — two stayed for at least 12 hours and gave a spectacular aerial display when passing by a swarm of dragonflies.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* — two flying around the ship for 3 hours until sunset.

On 10th a White Wagtail was aboard in position 14°20'N 42°00'E (S. Red Sea).

On 24 Oct M.V. *STOLT TEMPLAR* (Met) recorded a falcon (thought to be either Lanner *F. biarmicus* or Saker *F. cherrug*, but perhaps more likely to have been a Sooty Falcon *F. concolor*) which came aboard close north of Great Hamish Island in position 14°10'N 42°47'E, and remained stationed in the mast until 26th. It was seen to catch a tern *Sterna* sp. in mid-flight which it ate while perched on the foremast.

SECTION G — INDIAN OCEAN AND ARABIAN SEA

1984

On 8 May M.V. *ORIENTAL CHIEF* (Met) recorded a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* aboard in position 66°46'N 76°53'E — 90nm west Sri Lanka, 80nm SW Cape Comorin (India).

1985

A close view was obtained by MGW and JM of a female Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* on board in position 18°13'N 57°14'E, 23nm SE Oman on 13 Sept, and a Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* stayed for 40 mins on 14th when 20nm SSE Ras al Hadd. A Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia xanthocollis* was also seen to land on board.

Two large herons, probably Grey Heron, arrived on board M.V. *BENAVON* (Met) on 27 Sept in position mid-way between Maldives Is. and C. Comorin, India. They remained until 30th when nearing Sumatra.

On 6 Oct M.V. *TROLL LAKE* (Met) reported an unidentified falcon, a Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus* and 5 swallows *Hirundo* sp. in the Bay of Bengal, 15°48'N 83°18'E — 80nm SE India. The falcon was seen to catch 2 swallows, and the Drongo caught and ate at least a dozen large dragonflies.

On 8 Oct M.V. *BEN ALDER* (Met) recorded 2 Grey Heron aboard in position 10°45'N 58°00'E, 220nm SE Socotra. They remained until 11th when they disappeared on passing Sri Lanka. An unidentified falcon, possibly a Lanner *F. biarmicus* joined the ship when 270nm west Laccadive Is. (08°42'N 68°00'E).

SECTION H — PERSIAN GULF AND GULF OF OMAN

1985

On 12 Sept MGW and JM saw two Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* perched on a lamp standard on a breakwater in Salalah on arrival there, and 5 probable Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea*. Three Ospreys were seen perched on an oil rig moored in the outer harbour of Dubai on 19th.

NOTE. The detailed notes from DMS operating in this area Jul-Nov 1985 will be published in *Sea Swallow* 36 — Ed.

SECTION I — PACIFIC, CHINA SEA, YELLOW SEA, CORAL SEA AND PHILIPPINE SEA

1983

PGWC recorded a probable Collared Kingfisher *Haleyon chloris* on 28 March in position 13°S 108°50'E — 236nm ESE Christmas Island, 305nm SW Java. On 6 April a Little Heron *Butorides striatus* (Juv) was aboard in position 22°N 126°30'E — 170nm SW Taiwan, 315nm NE Philippines. An adult Little Heron and a Swallow *Hirundo rustica* were aboard on 7th in position 26°45'N 126°30'E — 26nm north Kume Shima. An unidentified redstart *Phoenicurus* sp. was also seen.

1984

Whilst operating in the South China Sea in the area 4°N 106°E (60nm north of Anamba Is.), PCD recorded a Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* on board on 20 Sept (one was later found dead on 1 Oct), and a Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* on 30th. Single egrets, probably Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, were seen briefly aboard on 3 Oct and 21 Oct. Also on 3 Oct a Black Heron *Dupetor flavicollis* flew past heading north, and on 20th at least 6 Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus* were around the vessel all day.

PCD noted a Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* around the ship on 24 Oct in position 1°50'N 104°50'E (close SE Singapore).

1985

On 1 April M.V. *APPLEBY* (Met) reported a heron, probably a White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae*, and an unidentified bird of prey *Falco* sp., which came aboard in position 19°12'S 117°15'E - 100nm NW Western Australia.

On 15/16 April M.V. *FORT VICTORIA* (Met) recorded a spectacular migration of Barn Swallows and other species 180nm SW Japan (30°35'N 127°36'E). Shortly after sunset on both 15th and 16th about "400 small birds settled in the ship's structure, rails and cranes, leaving at daybreak". Photographs showed them to be mainly Barn Swallows but there were also a few larger white birds (presumably egrets - Ed.).

NGC reported that during 150 observing days at sea during 1985/86 in the area off Tasmania and the Coral Sea off New Guinea he saw extremely few landbirds. These included Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena* on 17 April when 108nm NNE Whitsunday Is. (18°27'S 149°37'E), and a Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* on 27 Apr when 29 nm east of Tasmania.

On 7 May an egret, almost certainly a Cattle Egret, landed on M.V. *MAIN EXPRESS* (Met) in position 33°48'N 147°06'E (350nm east of Japan), and another of the same species when nearly 700nm east of Japan on 31 May.



Japanese Grosbeak *Eophona personata*
Photo: B. A. Mullan

On 29 May a duck was sighted aboard M.V. *EVERACE* (Met) in position 46°N 166°36'E - 500nm SE Kuril Is. From photographs taken it was identified as a probable Green-winged/Common Teal *Anas crecca*. It was fed regularly and remained for several days.

JWW reported a probable Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* on 31 May which made a poor landing on top of the containers in position 31°30'N 154°43'E (700nm SE Japan). It showed obvious signs of exhaustion and remained sheltering for 3 hours, but when disturbed it flew off and was not seen again.

On 2 Sept JWW recorded an unidentifiable "peep", possibly a Sanderling *Crocethia alba*, 240nm west of San Francisco; the wind was NE force 4. On 3rd a probable Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* 60nm west of Monterey, Ca. A small

raptor, possibly a Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii* or Sharp-shinned Hawk *A. striatus*, circled and finally settled on board in position 37°30'N 133°30'W - 500nm west of San Francisco.

On 6 Nov a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* settled aboard M.V. HAMPSHIRE (Met) in position 250nm SW S. Japan (26°27'N 133°03'E).

NGC saw 4 Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* on 24 Oct in position 18°15'S 149°33'E (W. Coral Sea) - 10nm SSW Abington Reef - which flew past heading south, and a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*. A Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* was sighted in non-breeding plumage on 28 Oct in central Coral Sea 190nm NNW Bampton Reef.

On 13 Nov a small hawk, possibly a Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, arrived aboard M.V. HOEGH DUKE (Met) in position 26°23'N 152°54'E - 150nm NW nearest land, Minami Tori Shima Is.

On 16 Nov M.V. CARDIGAN BAY (Met) recorded a Japanese Grosbeak *Eophona personata* in position 32°14'N 134°52'E - 60nm south of Japan. This was identified from excellent photographs taken by Mr B. A. Mullan (member RNBWS). Two probable Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus* settled on board on 17th when 40nm SE S. Japanese Islands (25°32'N 127°33'E).

1986

NGC recorded a Collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris* which came aboard during heavy rain and remained 2 hours on 11 Apr in position 9°46'S 151°13'E, 10nm NW Normanby Is. Papua New Guinea. Six Pied Imperial Pigeons *Ducula bicolor* were seen flying NW in a similar area on 14th, and on 10 May a Whimbrel and a Fairy Martin *Cecropis ariel* were identified 33nm west of Flinder's Reef (17°45'S 147°49'E).

SECTION J— SOUTH ATLANTIC

1983

PGWC recorded an egret, probably a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* in mid-Atlantic, 32°20'S 20°10'W - 1250nm SE Cape Frio, Brazil on 4 March.

1985

Another Cattle Egret far from land was reported by ARL in position 41°25'S 50°47'W, 300nm SE Argentina on 8 April.

1986

On 25 Mar AKR recorded a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* which stationed itself onboard 12nm south of Sealion Island, Falklands and remained until next day — see Short Note page 00.

On 3 Apr four Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* were recorded by AKR 40nm west of New Island, W. Falklands, and six were sighted flying east 440nm WNW South Georgia on 12 May.

NOTE. The number of Cattle Egrets reported has increased dramatically in recent years, and the Falkland Islands Trust News reports that several "waves of them occurred on the Islands in April 1986. After strong N/NW gales on 15 April, up to 3,000 birds were seen — the largest influx ever recorded there.

NOTES ON THE LAVA GULL OF THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

By Floyd E. Hayes, Kent R. Beaman, and William S. Baker

Except for a behavioural study by Snow and Snow (1969) and a few other noteworthy observations by Bailey (1961), Moynihan (1962), and Hailman (1963), the Lava Gull *Larus fuliginosus* endemic to the Galapagos Islands remains poorly studied despite its status as one of the world's rarest gulls. This note describes several interesting observations on this species.

Unusual injury. On 29 June 1984, an immature Lava Gull was observed with its tongue protruding from a hole at the base of the lower mandible. The bird associated with five other Lava Gulls, and was photographed (see Fig. 1) as it rested on a yacht a hundred metres east of Volcan Alcedo, Isla Isabela, in the Galapagos Islands. The behaviour of the bird appeared perfectly normal, and on several occasions the gull easily picked up food scraps with its bill from the surface of the water. The tongue frequently moved in and out, but could not be withdrawn into its natural position inside the bill.

Gil DeRoy (*pers. comm.*), a lifelong naturalist in the islands who showed us the bird, said this was the second such Lava Gull he had seen. DeRoy felt these birds were perfectly capable of surviving despite the awkward position of the tongue. In a similar context, Pomeroy (1962) commented on the remarkable survival abilities of many birds with grossly deformed bills.

Betty R. Grant (*pers. comm.*) suggested that the injury may have resulted from a kleptoparasitic attack by a Magnificent or Great Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* or *F. minor*. Both species are well known pirates of many bird species (Brockmann and Barnard 1979), humans (Buckley and Tilger 1983), and sea lions (Hayes and Baker 1985). Alexander (1928:179) noted that during such attacks frigatebirds often deliver a fierce peck with their long hooked beaks which may dislocate a wing. Thus it seems plausible that a frigatebird might have pulled out through the throat the tongue of the Lava Gull while attempting to grab a piece of food. Duffy (1982), however, observed kleptoparasitism among a variety of seabirds in the Galapagos Islands, and accordingly another species of bird or even another Lava Gull may have caused the injury. Perhaps future observations may reveal a different cause.

Sitting on Water. Snow and Snow (1969) reported that Lava Gulls rarely settled on the water, and recorded only one such instance. During a two-week cruise we observed eight birds sitting on the water, and believe they rest on the water as frequently as any other gull. This agrees with the observations of Gifford (1913) who reported that Lava Gulls often alighted on the water.



Fig. 1. Lava Gull *Larus fuliginosus*

Utilizing a Fresh Water Source. During August-September 1983, Beaman observed a group of Lava Gulls bathing and drinking fresh water from rivulets coming out of the ground at Pelican Bay, Isla Santa Cruz, during low tide. The fresh water was in abundance due to the recent El Niño which set records for rainfall in the islands. This behavioural preference seems unusual for a bird adapted for existence in an environment devoid of fresh water.

Other Galapagos seabirds, such as the Magnificent Frigatebird regularly utilize fresh water at Lago Junco, on Isla San Cristobal, largest body of fresh water in the Galapagos (Beaman *pers. obs.*). The water source used by the Lava Gulls was temporary, and may only be present after an El Niño year (every 4 to 6 years on the average). Lago Junco is permanent and may be utilized year round. Lava Gulls have not been observed using Lago Junco for bathing or drinking.

Acknowledgements

We thank W. K. Hayes and E. R. Schwab for comments which helped improve this paper. The DeRoy family kindly allowed us to ride aboard their yacht *Inti*, and Gil and Anita DeRoy were gracious hosts.

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NEW AND UNUSUAL SEABIRD RECORDS SUMMARISED FROM RECENT LITERATURE

By S. E. Chapman

This annual summary aims to present observations (sight records, captures or extensions to breeding range) which add significantly to our understanding in distribution terms. It is very tempting when sifting through the literally hundreds of seabird papers published across the world each year, to deviate from the original purpose. First breeding records in a country always stand out; first sightings are exciting particularly if there is some logical reason which can be attached to the occurrence. Readers of course have to make their own judgements on the reliability of sight records. There are no guarantees here, and reappraisals may lead to the deletion of records.

In my research this year a paper by D. M. Teixeira, J. B. Nacinovic and R. Novelli, which appeared in the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* (105: 49-51), is noteworthy not because it meets the exact criteria above, but because the authors re-examine seabird material in Brazilian ornithological collections revealing some misidentifications. For example, birds recorded as Great-winged Petrels *Pterodroma macroptera* are now identified as Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* or Kerguelen Petrel *Pterodroma brevirostris*. Thus the status of *P. macroptera* in Brazilian waters appears to be reduced to sight records only between Rio Grande and Santa Catarina. The only South American specimen of the

Madeiran Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*, perhaps not surprisingly, now turns out to be Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. Sight records mentioned include an adult Red-billed Tropic-bird on the coast of C. Frio, Rio de Janeiro in Mar 84, which appears to be the most southerly sighting in the Atlantic. In a subsequent paper on Brazilian seabirds D. M. Teixeira, D. Oren and R. C. Best (*Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 106:74-77) note a Great Skua *Catharacta skua skua* collected at 01°00'S 47°30'W on 3 Jan 75. These skuas of course are generally thought to winter in the temperate and subtropical Atlantic, although a British ringed bird was recovered in the Caribbean in 1968, *Bird Study* 15:33-34.

From elsewhere in the literature the following is a list of highlights. I am indebted again this year to Captain N. G. Cheshire for supplying extracts from Australian journals which I would not otherwise see.

King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus*. Second record of a bird ashore in South Africa, at 33°42'S 26°02'E on 28 Jan 82. G. J. B. Ross and V. G. Cockcroft, 1985. *Cormorant* 13:69-70.

Adelie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae*. First record for Tasmania. D. Tuffy and P. Fazackerley, 1984. *Tasmanian Bird Rept.* 13:24-25.

Buller's Albatross *Diomedea bulleri*. The recently discovered colony on Three Kings Island, mentioned in last year's report, is thriving with 15 nests reported in 1985. J. McCallum, F. Brook and M. Francis, 1985. *Notornis* 32:257-259.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. A single bird found alive, its feet frozen to the deck on board a shrimp trawler at 77°N off NW Spitzbergen in Nov 80. The bird, which later died, is now deposited in the Tromsø Museum skin collection. W. Vader and R. T. Barret, 1984. *Ardea* 72:235.

Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur*. First breeding in the Kerguelen Archipelago in 1984. J-L. Mougin, 1985. *Oiseau*. 55:313-345.

Dove Prion *Pachyptila desolata*. Remains from fresh pellets of a Subantarctic Skua *Catharacta skua* at Inaccessible Island are attributed to this prion species locally caught, and this is a new species for the Tristan Group. M. W. Fraser, 1984. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 104:154-5.

Herald Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*. A single bird off Sydney, NSW on 30 Oct 82. A. McBride and D. Hobcroft, 1985. *Australian Birds* 19:53-55. Breeding at Raine Island, Queensland (11°36'S 144°01'E) has recently been confirmed. B. R. King, 1984. *Emu* 84:246-247.

White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma externa cervicalis*. The first Australian specimen was found dead, apparently killed by a car, in NSW at 31°17'S 152°49'E. W. E. Boles, K. Bartram and G. P. Clancy, 1985. *Australian Birds* 19:51-52.

Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis*. Confirmed breeding on South East Island, Chatham Islands: a bird incubating a single egg. D. Merton, 1984. *Notornis* 31:265-266.

MacGillivray's Petrel *Pseudobulweria macgillivrayi*. Well organised searches resulted in a single adult captured on the night of 30 April 1984, confirming the continuing existence of this enigmatic petrel on Gau, Fiji. D. Watling and R. F. Lewanavua, 1985. *Ibis* 127:230-233.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*. A well documented record, off Woollongong, NSW on 24 Feb 85. A. McBride, 1985. *Australian Birds* 19:50-51.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*. On 29 June 1981 a small shearwater first noted by its call was captured on Skomer Island, Wales, and clearly identified as a male Madeiran Little Shearwater. The individual, having been ringed, returned in 1982. However, a second bird (female) was heard in flight in 1983. M. Alexander, 1984. *Ardea* 72:236-7. This was also reported in *British Birds* 79:28-33, which incorrectly noted the first occurrence as 1982.

Northern Gannet *Sula bassana*. Gannet numbers are growing at established colonies: a bird on a nest in the Shiant Isles, 8km east of Lewis, marks a new Scottish breeding site for this species. N. E. Buxton, 1985. *Scottish Birds* 13:187-188, and *BTO News* 145.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*. First reported breeding in mainland France at Grand-Lieu, Loire-Atlantique. L. Marion and P. Marion, 1984. *Oiseau* 54:267-271.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*. A new bird for New Zealand at Manawatu River estuary on 25 Sep 83 arrived with an influx of other northern hemisphere waders. Later in the year two more appeared at Lake Ellesmere. J. L. Moore and M. Moore, 1984. *Notornis* 31:330-333.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*. An unprecedented influx and wreck in New Zealand in Jan-Feb 1983. D. Melville, 1985. *Notornis* 32:51-73.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*. First sighting from the island of Madeira in early December 1983. W. R. P. Bourne, 1984. *Bocagiana* (Funchal) 76:1-6.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*. First record for Sumatra on 22 October 1984. P. Andrews, 1985. *Kukila* 1:9.

SHORT NOTES

SOUTH ATLANTIC STOWAWAYS

Lieutenant C. A. Snow, Royal Navy — H.M.S. *Birmingham*.

H.M.S. *Birmingham* and R.F.A. *Olwen* visited South Georgia from 24th-29th October 1984. The first night was spent anchored at Grytviken before sailing to Stromness the following morning. The following account recalls the cold weather experienced that night, and the refuge a warship can offer to cold and wet birds.

During the night of 24th there was a heavy snowfall and temperatures plunged below zero, freezing the salt water on deck. As dawn broke it was clear that both *Olwen* and ourselves played unwitting hosts to large numbers of petrels and prions that had sheltered on board. Most of these birds took to the wing as the sun rose, but two Common Diving-petrels and one Dove Prion were taken into custody by various departments on board.

The first diving-petrel found itself in the care of the LYNX helicopter flight maintainers — very aptly! Overnight it had been successfully warmed up in the hangar, had its statutory 8 hours' sleep, was given a ration of flight "nutty" and by mid-day achieved a rolling take-off from the flight deck never to be seen again: aviators clearly stick together!

Our second diving-petrel was a rather more reluctant bird. It had been found huddled beneath the 30mm BMARC gun-



King Penguins watching bird watcher —

Lt. C. A. Snow, R.N., South Georgia

Photo: Capt. D. A. J. Blackburn, R.N., H.M.S. *Birmingham*

mounting and had been taken into custody by the BMARC maintainers. Unhurt but unwilling, it was placed on the 30mm barrel overnight on the 25th in an attempt to induce it to leave. The following morning, however, found it still there but now joined by a second which presumably had heard of the BMARC workshop warmth and hospitality. Both birds then remained on board until flying off that afternoon.

Our third customer was a Dove Prion which had landed on the bridge wing. Presumably frightened by the bustle of our sailing preparations for Stromness, it took refuge in a bridge drain outlet — head first. There it remained throughout the passage, its head in the drain, two-thirds of its body outside, looking for all the world like an Antarctic ostrich.

On arrival at Stromness the bird was recovered from the drain and, on inspection, was seen to have a slight cut on its breast. It was therefore put into the care of the bridge Quartermaster overnight, and the following morning it took flight, perhaps to avoid having to listen to yet another salty "dit" from the bridge team.

During our South Atlantic deployment we never again had to play host to birds on board. This one occasion gave us a very pleasant opportunity to study them close-up, and I hope that none of them were any the worse for our humble hospitality. Even now I can see that single diving-petrel, perched on the outboard BMARC barrel etched against the evening sky and snowclad mountains with one eye glancing at the warmth of the BMARC workshop and the other gazing out at the rolling icy wastes of the vast South Atlantic Ocean, and the battle for survival from which it had had such a brief respite.

STORM FATALITIES — TUBENOSES

Lieutenant A. K. Ross, B.Sc., Royal Navy — H.M.S. *Hermione*

Albatross and petrel species, collectively known as "tubenoses", are a group long admired for their mastery of flight and soaring skills. But accidents can happen as the following unusual event shows.

The night of 27 February 1986, 45 miles WNW of New Island, West Falklands, was particularly dark with heavy cloud cover obscuring the moon and a 55 knot north-westerly wind produced very turbulent conditions above the ship. Throughout the previous day, the ever-present Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* and Giant Petrels *Macronectes giganteus* had experienced no difficulty in avoiding the pitching rigging, demonstrating supreme manoeuvrability together with an almost sporting desire to come as close as they dared to danger before recovering.

Soon after darkness fell however, a large bird was seen in the glare of the navigation lights to strike a glancing blow against the superstructure forward of the bridge before crashing heavily on the bridge roof and ending up abaft the funnel on the boat deck. Next day the corpse was examined and found to be a Giant Petrel in fairly dark plumage with a 70" wingspan and 38" body length. No obvious defect or disability was found and death was caused by a crushed thorax, presumably received on hitting the bridge roof. The force of the impact must have been enormous since the entire breast musculature on one side had been removed by the blow. A Slender-billed Prion *Pachyptila belcheri* was also found beneath the foremast having received a broken neck, and at least two other large petrels were seen to strike the ship heavily before being swept overboard.

Even in such turbulent conditions, these deaths were considered surprising; similar weather conditions later during the deployment produced no repetition of these unfortunate events. It is therefore concluded that exceptionally dangerous conditions for these species, which habitually soar into wind just upwind of birds on passage, were caused by the combination of two factors — the very dark night, and the relative wind 10° on the starboard bow.

SEABORNE OBSERVATIONS OF PEREGRINE FALCON BEHAVIOUR

Lieutenant A. K. Ross, B.Sc., Royal Navy — H.M.S. *Hermione*

At around 1730 local on 25 March 1986, whilst on patrol 12 miles south of Sealion Island, East Falklands, a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* was observed approaching the ship from the direction of land. The bird flew directly to the foc'sle guardrail and alighted with what appeared to be prey in its talons. This was later identified as a Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. Within 20 minutes the falcon had devoured the luckless petrel greedily and efficiently, leaving only the primaries and a pair of webbed feet to litter the deck. It immediately took off and circled the ship at about 200 ft flying very actively although with no apparent inclination to leave our vicinity. Sadly it then became lost from view for about 10 minutes but at 1845 returned to its perch on the foc'sle with a second Wilson's Storm-petrel which it again consumed in 20 minutes. At 1930 it took a third, before settling in the foremast for the night.

As dawn broke next day, clouds of down falling past the bridge windows told us that our falcon had already caught its breakfast, this time a White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*. A further two Wilson's Storm-petrel were taken within the next 2 hours. At 1000, whilst watching the many petrels in our wake, a sudden flash of movement caught my gaze and I turned just in time to see another Wilson's Storm-petrel spinning helplessly into the

sea beside the ship. Within seconds the falcon was down on the surface to collect its handiwork, and flew up into the mast with its fourth meal of the day. By 1200, the falcon had left heading towards Cape Meredith, clearly visible 15 miles to the north.

Throughout the period of observation on 25 March, the weather was dull and wet with a westerly wind 15/20 knots. Next day was a clear calm day with brilliant sunshine. The falcon's plumage appeared typical for a Peregrine but slightly darker than individuals I had seen before, with a distinct rufous tint to the breast and neck. The small size and slim build suggested a young male.

Although an incident of obvious excitement, what was truly staggering was the bird's voracious appetite. It is hard to think of a suitable terrestrial prey in the Falkland Islands present in sufficient numbers to satisfy such demands.

COMMENT. This behaviour is typical of Peregrines taking passage on ships and preying on passerine migrants in the North Atlantic, and many other oceans of the world, as has been reported frequently in previous *Sea Swallows*. But this incident of an apparently shore-based individual using a vessel as a platform of convenience from which to feed does seem unusual. Bourne and Curtis record two similar examples off the Falklands (see *Sea Swallow* 34:p28) including an immature on 30 Mar 1984 which stayed a week. It would seem that maybe the Falklands provide a special situation. Ed.

BOOK REVIEWS

SEABIRD ATLASES

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- Powers, K. D. 1983. *Pelagic distributions of marine birds off the northeastern United States*. U.S. Department of Commerce, NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-F/NEC-27, Woods Hole, Mass.

It has recently become fashionable for governments who are about to embark on offshore petroleum and fishery development to commission hasty surveys of the distribution of the local seabirds, which are then analysed by computer to produce impressive maps purporting to show whether birds might be affected. The results tend to fall into three types; those which cover the distribution of birds at sea, seabird breeding sites, and other waterbirds occurring along the shore, and I shall confine myself to the examples of the first type listed above here (the first of which has already been mentioned last year).

Methods of portraying the distribution of birds at sea have evolved from plotting the number of birds seen (P. Jespersen, *Oceanographical Reports Danish "Dana" Expedition 1920-22* No. 7, King 1970), through plotting the number seen in a given distance (King 1974, Brown 1986) or time (Brown *et al.* 1975, Pitman 1986), to calculating the density of birds per square kilometre (Gould *et al.* 1982, Powers 1983, Blake *et al.* 1984; see discussion by M. L. Tasker *et al.* and J. C. Haney, *Auk* 101:567-577, 102:897-900). In fact the method used often makes little difference since all these arbitrary indices tend to vary in much the same way, and each has limitations already discussed in *Sea Swallow* (33:40-41), so that it may have merits and drawbacks under different circumstances, and none is absolutely reliable.

The results are all presented in a rather similar manner, starting with a simple description of techniques and local oceanography, followed by annotated maps portraying the density of each species at different seasons on a rectangular grid. It is notable that none of these accounts pays much attention to the effect of the weather on the conspicuousness, behaviour and distribution of the birds, and, apart from the special report by Hope Jones and Tasker (1983), the revealing observations of birds seen from the coast (*Ibis* 124:81-88) are generally ignored. The product is commonly rather obscure, difficult to follow, and seldom as informative as it might have been, and there is clearly still room for much more work here.

W. R. P. Bourne

Chalmers, M. L. 1986. **Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Hong Kong**. Fourth (Revised) Edition. The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, P.O. Box 12460, Hong Kong. Price HK\$50 (local) or HK\$65 / US\$8.50 / UK£5.50.

Originally published in 1960 under the authorship of A. M. Macfarlane and A. D. Macdonald, this edition is packed with useful information in its 270 pages. For any ornithologist shore-based or visiting Hong Kong it is an essential reference as to what species can be expected at each month of the year and where best to go. It is based on the meticulous work of numerous observers over many years and is a fine tribute to the H.K.B.W.S. The inaugural meeting of the Society was held in August 1957, attended by 15 people. A year later there were 31 members and by 1985 over 290.

The species are listed under six categories:

A. Recorded apparently wild within the last 50 years	380
B. Recorded apparently but not within the last 50 years	1
C. Originally introduced by man and established, now established as regular feral breeder	6
D. Apparently wild but escape or release cannot be excluded	17
E. Suspected escape	34
F. Identification doubtful	25
Total	463

Categories A-C are further subdivided into status groups:

Residents	82
Migrant — Summer visitor	19
Winter visitor	115
Passage migrant	78
Vagrant	81
Occasional visitor	2
Status uncertain	10
Total	387

The data is presented with an impressive system of cross-references and bibliography, and for most species a simple histogram shows on a monthly basis the number of years (1958-82) each has been recorded. Other tables give a clear graphical presentation of passage migrants also on a monthly basis.

Of special interest to ships passing through Hong Kong waters and the South China Sea, and also to me who attempts to analyse R.N.B.W.S. landbird records, is the statement that "limited radar studies (Melville) 1980 have indicated a strong northerly and north-easterly trend to spring movements, with peak activity in April and May, and south-westerly movement in autumn, with most activity from September to November. These directions coincide with the upper air currents suggesting that birds may be utilising tail winds to assist long-distant flight". These directions are much as one might expect from looking at the topography from a map, and the main stream of passerines presumably passing between the mainland of East Asia and Vietnam, Borneo and the Indonesian Islands. But the most intriguing mystery is the relative abundance of many

migrant species in spring as compared to autumn. This is the opposite from what one would predict, with the migrant numbers swollen by young birds in autumn. One can only presume that they overfly Hong Kong or take a different route in autumn. Here is a challenge on which maybe R.N.B.W.S. members can shed some light, if enough records can be compiled over the years from the South China Sea and adjacent sea areas.

Even though my own sea-going days are over I shall find this book an invaluable reference when trying to make identifications from the many and varied records which reach me. When used in conjunction with the *Field Guide to the Birds of South-east Asia* (King, B. *et al.* 1985) it is a great help for narrowing down the possibilities for the area before thumbing aimlessly through the profusion of unfamiliar pictures and descriptions of the latter.

The book as a whole is a good demonstration of how to process and present a wealth of data in a clear and readily understandable form, for the practical use to the average bird watcher. Congratulations, H.K.B.W.S.!

M. B. C.

TAIL PIECE

"BIRDS AWAY"

"Captain Sir, Officer of the Watch" went the loudspeaker in my cabin, "we are now in touch with Range Safety, and the range is clear, especially now that your little brown bird has moved from the launcher to the inside of the bridge".

It was Whit weekend in the South-west Approaches and the occasion was a High Seas *SEADART* missile firing. The little brown bird was in fact a Spotted Flycatcher, a bird that is a particular favourite of mine. Flycatchers arrive in our garden (near Petersfield, Hants.) every May, nest conveniently where we can all see what goes on, and the sight of a family of flycatchers doing first flying "famils" and early air intercept training is a joy to behold.

That Whit Saturday was a really sparkling day. Two targets duly appeared, two missiles roared off the launcher and ruined the First Lieutenant's paintwork, and two targets obligingly fell out of the sky — and all the while the flycatcher perched at the front of the bridge with a ringside seat.

That was the end of the entertainment, and we then set off for Portsmouth at high speed to salvage what was left of our Whit weekend. We were passing the Nab Tower when I noticed that my flycatcher had gone, but no one had actually seen him go — and no one cared much either as H.M.S. *Southampton* entered harbour and berthed alongside in good time to get home for lunch.

That is the end of the story — except that when I arrived home my wife wouldn't allow me to park near the house — "the flycatchers have just arrived and they mustn't be disturbed".

Captain D. S. Dobson, Royal Navy.

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INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Interested persons are invited to submit contributions for *Sea Swallow*. Authors do not need to be R.N.B.W.S. members. Material may take the form of papers, notes, progress reports, letters or reviews.

Manuscripts should ideally be typed in double spacing and submitted in duplicate. Figures and diagrams should be prepared in the size of final production.

The style used in *Sea Swallow* should be followed, with the standard abbreviations, nomenclature and use of references as in *British Birds*.

Contributions are welcome at any time, but if for inclusion in the next edition, must reach the Editor by **31st March**.